





Class _____

Book _____

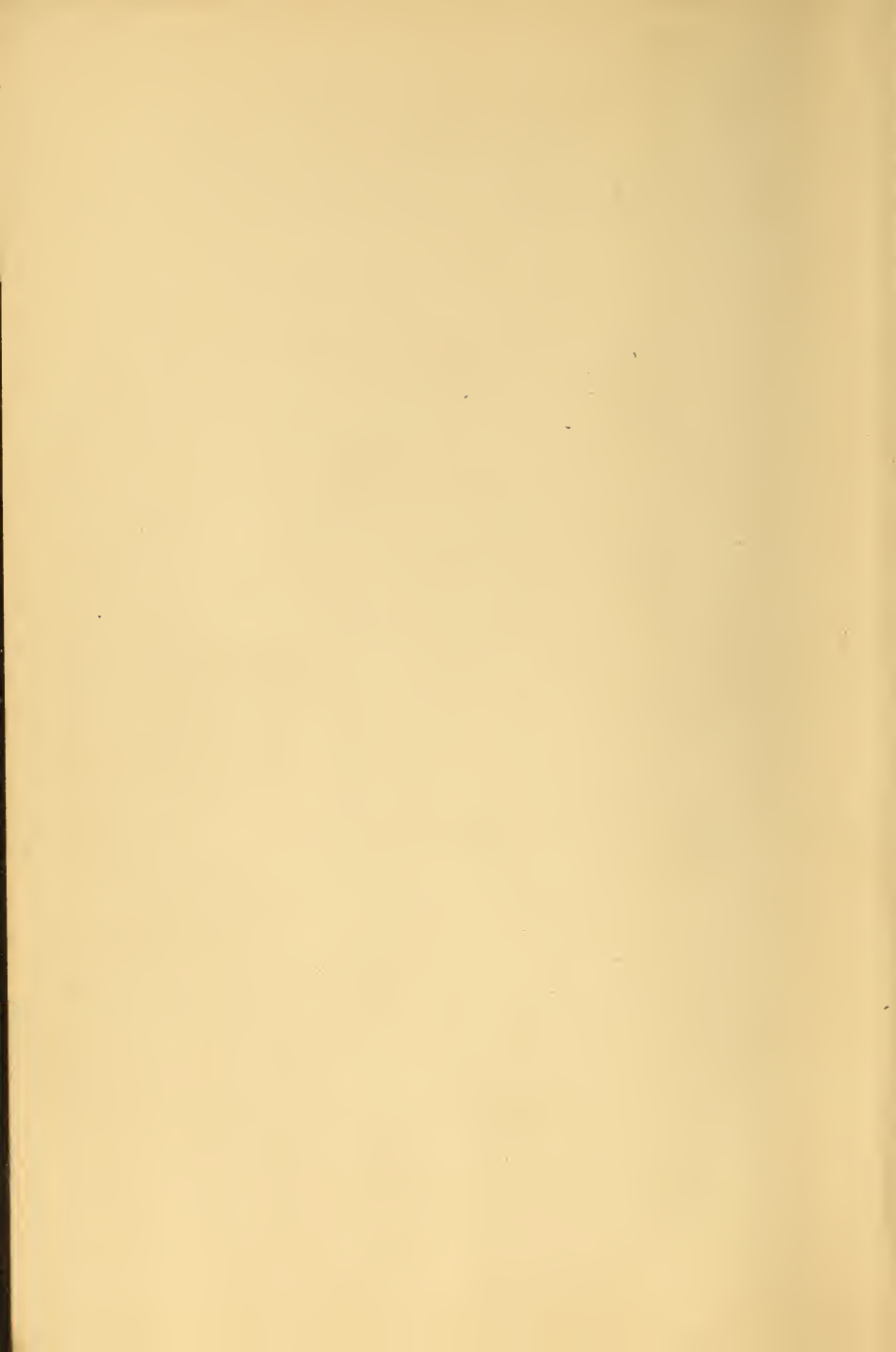
Copyright N^o _____

COPYRIGHT DEPOSIT.



THE CROSS
AND THE GARDEN

REV. F. W. NORWOOD, D.D.



THE CROSS AND THE GARDEN

*Frederick
allan*
BY
REV. F. W. NORWOOD, D.D.

MINISTER OF THE CITY TEMPLE, LONDON



NEW YORK
GEORGE H. DORAN COMPANY

291922

BX 7233
N67C7

COPYRIGHT, 1922,
BY GEORGE H. DORAN COMPANY

THE CROSS AND THE GARDEN.

PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

© CL A683873

OCT 25 '22 75.10

CONTENTS

	PAGE
I THE CROSS AND THE GARDEN	9
II THE FUNDAMENTAL SACRIFICE	19
III WHAT IS TRUTH?	29
IV THE THREE CROSSES	43
V THE INCOMPLETE PASSION	52
VI THE GOD OF THE LIVING	61
VII THE CREDULITY OF INCREDULITY	73
VIII TO ALL NATIONS	84
IX GOING BEYOND JESUS	96
X HOW FAITH GROWS	105
XI GOD IS LIGHT	116
XII THINGS THAT WORK TOGETHER	129
XIII THE PLACE OF VISION	141
XIV THE ONE THING	154
XV WANTED: LEADERS FOR THE CROWD!	168
XVI "LAST OF ALL"	179

THE CROSS AND THE GARDEN

THE CROSS AND THE GARDEN

I

THE CROSS AND THE GARDEN

TEXT: *John* 19:41. Now in the place where He was crucified there was a garden.

AND the garden, if they had understood and believed its message, made the resurrection inevitable. For the garden was a collection of choice flowers that Joseph of Arimathaea had been gathering together through the years. It was his dream that some day he would sleep in the midst of his garden when life's fitful fever should be over. He would lie down among the flowers that he had loved so well, not as is our horrid custom, enclosed in a wooden box, buried deep beneath the sod; but he would repose upon a ledge, preserved by the spices of the garden among the flowers that he had loved all his life.

Alas! it had never entered into his dream that the serenity of his garden would be broken by the raucous shouts of men, that its peace would be invaded with pain, that the crimson of his choicest flowers would be out-crimsoned by the blood of the most flower-like man he had ever seen.

For Joseph had never seen a life that reminded him so much of the flowers in his garden as the life of Jesus of Nazareth. It seemed almost too fair to be truly rooted in this murky and miry world. It seemed to belong to Heaven rather than to earth, it seemed like the promise of what a man ought to be rather than the revelation of what a man could really be. Joseph had watched this flower-like life through the years in silence and reticence but with growing faith and devotion. When he saw it trampled down under the heels of men, he felt the same indignation, only deeper if possible, as if he had seen them trample down his flowers beneath their feet. In his indignation he was stung out of his reticence; he rushed into the midst of the horror and said,—“Let Him lie among my flowers, He is more worthy to lie there than I.” No one else thought of the garden that day but Joseph of Arimathaea who loved it. Long afterwards, when John was writing the story he remembered, and his face was lit up with a smile as he wrote,—

“Now in the place where He was crucified there was a garden.”

So they laid Jesus in the garden where every flower was bearing mute but beautiful witness to the life that springs out of death, to the life that shall endless be. As the breeze rustled amidst the plants of the garden, every flower bowed to its neighbour and smiled, saying:—“Man is always a destroyer; he tramples us down beneath his feet, he strips our kinsfolk of their fruits, their nuts, their seeds. He cannot live without us though we could live without him. He is the life destroyer, we are the life makers. When

he sees a life that is like a flower he cries, Crucify! Crucify! He has not learned our secret yet; we know that those beautiful lives like ourselves only die that they might live again." When the breeze ceased, and the sun was setting and every flower bowed its head to slumber, it whispered to itself as it fell asleep,—
"There will be a resurrection in the morning."

If they had only understood and believed the meaning of the garden, they would have known that the resurrection was inevitable.

You say that is poetry rather than fact. There are some people who seldom see anything beautiful in the world and when they do they say,—"It is poetic, but not true." "Poetry," said Aristotle long ago, "is more philosophic than history and of a higher seriousness." Men who crucify never see the garden. They look for blood and they find it, for they spill it out of its crimson arteries where it colors delicately the palpitating skin and splash it like wanton savages who over-turn the artist's paint-pot over his exquisitely tinted picture, the while they tread the flowers down under their heels. There is no garden for men who crucify.

Have you not noticed that the world has no character until you give it one? You cannot say whether it is love or indifference or even hate,—you give it its character. It is a pig-sty for pigs, it is a garden for those who love flowers. In the end you make the world, you give it its character, it answers back to what is in your own heart.

Yesterday I was going through a street in the slums. There were half a dozen children in front of me of

tender age. Their eyes fell on some innocent word on a tradesman's sign, and they twisted it in their unclean little minds to make of it something obscene. God knows I do not blame the little children; I rather pity them. Those who are blamable are older folk who by guilty speech or even by equally guilty silence allow such thoughts to germinate in minds which ought to be pure. I could blame also some hoary old customs and social conditions which make such things possible and almost inevitable for children. It sent a shudder through me to notice that the minds of children could make a pigsty of the world. I thought of what the Poet, T. E. Brown, said:—

“Between our folding lips
God interposing, slips
An embryo life,—and goes;
And this becomes your rose.
We love, God makes: in our sweet mirth
God spies occasion for a birth.
Then is it His, or is it ours?
I know not—He is fond of flowers.”

The one is poetry, the other is fact. To some minds the only facts are those which are covered with slime. The world is what you make it; it is a garden for those who have flowers within their souls: it is a jungle for those who have wild beasts therein.

Man made the cross, God made the garden; they did not see the garden but it was there all the time. John remembered half a century later writing it down in the imperishable record,—

“In the place where He was crucified there was a garden.”

For the garden is older than the cross. Plants were the first living things that God made. There could be no life until there were plants, for plants are the only things in this world that can create living material. All animals, including man himself destroy life, plants make it. Somewhere back in the long ages there was a period when there was no living thing. Something had been flung out of the flaming bosom of the sun, seething in its heat but gradually cooling, and there was no living thing. If that had been all there was, you could have told then if you had been there, and had been wise enough, all that would be in the world to-day; but somehow and somewhere there came into the midst of things a principle of life and plants began to grow. Nobody knows how it happened, nobody can tell even yet, but the plants made life out of death, gave to the world something which had not visibly existed before,—shall we say, created it? Oh, well, I do not know, who knows? I suppose it was there somewhere in the very beginning, potentially All that was to come was there but it had not crossed the bridge from the inorganic to the organic until it crossed in the mystery of plant life. The first beginning of a garden made the world a home; the first development that made for growth of any kind or opened up any door of possibility, was in essence a resurrection, life out of the dead.

There is not a flower anywhere that does not speak of the resurrection. It is surely not harder to believe that Jesus rose from the dead, than it is, if you truly understand the nature of the problem, to believe what you know is true, that plants brought life into being

out of a dead world. Long before the cross a miracle had been accomplished and the world was all aglow with the dandelions, the daisies, the buttercups, and all the beauteous flowers which you scarce can say are alive and yet you know are not dead.

Jesus said, "Consider the lilies, how they grow." If we kept near the lilies we would be better men and women. If we kept near the lilies we would not crucify. Men only crucify when they do not see the flowers. You cannot take in in one sweep of vision a lily and a cross. When you want a cross you do not see the lily; when the cross is a hideous fact you know the lily is greater. Man can destroy, only God can create.

Why do we not dare to judge life more by its flowers than by its slime? There was a significant article in one of the newspapers this week from the pen of Dean Inge. It has gladdened my heart because it came at last to this point, that the supreme line of argument for the life beyond is the line of your affections. ✓ Love is the supreme argument after all for the continuity of life. There is nothing destroyed in this world, every school boy knows that. Things go back to their primal elements, they are used up again and again in all manner of ways. You lose track of them. That which was once part of a flower may become part of a Cathedral next, you do not know where it comes from, you do not know where it is going to, but it has not lost its identity though you can no longer identify it; you speak of it as the conservation of energy.

But where does love go? You cannot split that up, it is not love if it loses its personal connection, it has

gone, the fairest thing, the most beautiful thing has eluded you. Do not mock me by speaking of the conservation of energy, or say that nothing is lost. I tell you that love is lost if personality is lost; so is reverence, and so is religion,—true religion. Your flowers are either your greatest mockery or God's greatest prophecy.

To me there is a whole world of theology in that one word which Jesus spoke to the weeping woman,—“MARY!” She was weeping so copiously, her heart was so broken that nothing comforted her. The empty tomb instead of being all athrob with hope was only vacant with despair. Even two angels, sitting one where the head and the other where the feet of Jesus had lain did not break through her grief or touch her imagination. Even Jesus Himself standing outside and speaking to her could not at first break through the crust of her despair. There was no argument that any school-man could have propounded that would have touched her; she was walled up in grief, and broken in despair.

And Jesus said,—“Mary!” In that word there was affection, the affection of a great true soul, a soul that loved her soul. And in that word there was reverence, the thing that Mary had lacked. God knows she had beauty and charm which brought her troops of admirers, but no reverence. She was the play-thing of others, she was their scorn. Nobody for years, but Jesus, had ever used her name in tones of reverence; He had always touched the deepest chords within her heart; He had made her believe that though she had been trampled in the soil her soul was yet a

flower, and she saw that beauteous vision again at that moment.

In that word there was religion, for He who spoke it stood to her for God and all the best she knew about God; and when that one word pierced her consciousness again, touched her heart afresh, religion was revived in the soul of Mary Magdalene. There is a whole world of theology in that one word; it means that God, reverence and affection are eternal in their essence, death has no power over them.

✓ Let us judge life by its flowers rather than by its crosses. Near every cross there is a garden if we would look for it. Many of us know that we pluck the choicest flowers at the foot of our crosses. Many of us know that it is the evil power of men which in the main makes the crosses, but it is the vibrant, (unobtrusive, ever pulsating power of God which makes the flowers.

For my part I dare to value life by its gardens rather than by its crosses. I would strive to do so even though faith faltered, though my theories fell like birds that were broken-winged, though every man in the world doubted the faith, the faith of the risen Christ; for my part I would try to believe in the gardens, I would try to believe in the flowers. If there could be a God whose character could not be harmonised with the flowers then I would have nought to do with Him, I could not worship Him, I would even defy Him.

✓ Believe in the flowers! I believe that beauty is an emanation from the divine. I am very conscious of the crosses, as you are. The cross is never so terrible

as it is to the man who sees it with the flowers in the fore-ground. It is easy for the brutal who only see red, to tolerate the cross. It is the artistic and poetic souls who quiver and quail in the presence of the cross, though even they believe through, and see in it at last a radiance and a beauty that others have not seen.

So long as there is a single flower blooming man should believe in God. One lily is enough to make a man believe in life after death. The flowers at the foot of the cross bear witness to the throbbing, patient power of God and the irresistible omnipotence of the Christ who was crucified. Flowers are the prophets of the world beyond, the heralds who declare that the good is never lost.

You remember perhaps those words of Browning's:—

“There shall never be one lost good! What was shall
live as before.

The evil is null, is naught, is silence implying sound;
What was good shall be good, with, for evil, so much
good more;

On the earth the broken arcs; in the heaven a perfect
round.

“All we have willed, or hoped, or dreamed of good shall
exist;

Not in semblance, but itself; no beauty or good or
power,

Whose voice has gone forth, but each survives for the
melodist

When eternity affirms the conception of an hour.

“The high that proved too high, the heroic for earth
too hard,

The passion that left the ground to lose itself in the
sky,
Are music sent up to God by the lover and the bard;
Enough that He heard it once: we shall hear it bye and
bye."

II

THE FUNDAMENTAL SACRIFICE

TEXT: *Revelation* 13:8. The Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.

IN those few words, infinity seems to be flung into a phrase. It is a strange book, this book called the Revelation of St. John. In our time one has a feeling that it is scarcely worth while to try and explain in detail its symbolism, it is so oriental, so highly coloured, so remote from our ordinary western thinking.

The experience of commentators through long centuries has shown how impossible it is to reach unanimity in our interpretations of this book. So much that was poignantly present or imminently impending to the writer has passed into the distance for us and it is only with difficulty that we may re-discover it. Opinions differ as to whether the meaning of the book is entirely in the past or whether it is not even yet mainly in the future. Amidst these contending views, choleric argumentative people continually quarrel about the book, and lethargic people consistently neglect it and so both become losers, for it is a great

and wonderful book with a singular faculty as I have said for flinging infinity into a mere phrase.

Nobody can read it through, even though they feel they do not understand it but they will carry away with them sentences they will never forget; great sentences which are like searchlights throwing light upon some of earth's most intricate problems. Here in this passage before us is one of those phrases:—

“The Lamb, slain from the foundation of the world.”

Nobody can forget that, nobody has forgotten. For all these centuries it has laid hold upon the imagination of Christian men. It is of course possible, and it is only right that I should point out to you that there are two ways of rendering this passage; it is largely a matter of punctuation. You may read it as though that phrase, “from the foundation of the world” belonged to the book in which the names of the elect were written or you may read it so that it belongs to the Lamb that was slain. But after all, to hesitate seems mere pedantry. We know that the Christian imagination laid hold of that thought of a fundamental sacrifice in the first generation. You remember how Peter says:—

“The precious blood of Christ, as of a Lamb without blemish and without spot: who verily was fore-ordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you.”

You can recall many passages in the Epistles of St. Paul which carry the thought concerning Jesus the

Christ back, back to the very beginning of things, back to the very heart and will of the Eternal. You cannot doubt that in the first generation the Christian mind seized upon this thought concerning the Christ, and in all the generations which have succeeded, the experience of men has been responding to it.

When you come to consider the life of Jesus of Nazareth as you consider most other people's lives, you wonder what there can have been about it which so took hold of men and so fastened itself upon the imagination of the world. If you have been to the East and have yourself trodden over those sacred spots, or if you have merely gazed at pictures of Jerusalem, the Mount of Olives, the Garden of Gethsemane, and perceived the comparative insignificance of these localities, the crudity of so many things that still persist in that locality, you find the thought coming into your mind, "How did it happen that a life lived amid such mean surroundings, in such a remote corner of the earth, at such a far distant time should have so taken hold of mankind as to become the central thing in history, in thought, in morals and in religion? Do you realise that there were probably not so many people who saw Jesus of Nazareth in the flesh as there were who saw the boat-race yesterday? It was only a brief life, very simple in its habits, very unostentatious in its methods, very clear and true in its character, a brief life blotted out suddenly in shame. How was it? Let history tell us, for it is a problem which falls to it to explain.

Surely it must be, as the Christian imagination saw almost from the first, that there were implications

in that life and in that death that go right back to the foundation of the world. That is what men of inspired intuition saw in the first generation, that is what men have been working out for nineteen centuries at least, and I venture to say will continue to work out so long as man endures.

Here in the heart of it is this comparison of Jesus Christ with the Lamb. Why, there is something that goes back to the foundation of things. There has always been something in the world which corresponded to the lamb, just as there has always been something in the world which found its appropriate symbol in the lion or the tiger. You cannot go out and look about you in this wonderful world of God's but you feel those two powers continually present, the power of the lion and the power of the lamb. When Nature smiles upon you and the sun shines, when the gentle rain falls bringing forth the harvest, when the great sea hushes itself and becomes like glass, you think of that marvellous gentleness that pulses through the world of which the lamb might seem to be the symbol. Ay, but to-morrow there will be not sunshine but storm, there will be not the green fertile meadows but the drought and the famine and the hurricane. You will marvel then at the power there is in the world which is ruthless, fierce and cruel as a lion or a tiger.

Away in Australia once, far away in the remoter parts where the drought sometimes comes and stays for months and even years, a minister of the Gospel came to the home of a settler and said to him as he met him on the verandah, "I have come to offer

prayer with you for the breaking of the drought." And the man said,—“Listen”—and as they listened they heard the poor sheep pitifully bleating, and the cattle gasping in the heat, and the man said, “If that prayer is not reaching Heaven do you think yours would?” Have we not looked upon Nature when she seemed the cruelest thing conceivable?

You remember those words of William Blake, who chose not the lion as the symbol of the more cruel aspect of nature but the tiger. The tiger was not known to the writers of the Bible or doubtless they would have fixed upon him rather than the lion as the emblem of the fierceness which is in things. In this strange chapter from which I have quoted you get the apocalyptic vision of evil as coming out of the sea in the form of a beast part leopard, part lion, part bear:—“The beast which I saw was like unto a leopard” (swift springing force) “and his feet were as the feet of a bear,” (dull brutal force) “and his mouth as the mouth of a lion” (strong, indomitable, fierce). William Blake has the same vision as he writes these words:—

“Tiger, tiger burning bright
In the forests of the night,
What immortal hand or eye
Could frame thy fearful symmetry?

“In what distant deep or skies
Burnt the fire of thine eyes?
On what wings dare he aspire?
What the hand dare seize the fire?

“And what shoulders and what art
Could twist the sinews of thy heart?
And when thy heart began to beat,
What dread hands and what dread feet;

“What the hammer, what the chain?
In what furnace was thy brain?
What the anvil? What dread grasp
Dare its deadly terrors clasp?

“When the stars threw down their spears,
And watered heaven with their tears,
Did He smile His work to see?
Did He who made the lamb make thee?

“Tiger, tiger burning bright
In the forests of the night,
What immortal hand or eye
Dare frame thy fearful symmetry?”

Expound it how you will, they go back to the foundation of things, the tiger and the lamb. No wonder that religious thought chose as the symbol for the expression of its deepest feeling, the lamb; no wonder that in the Old Testament literature you meet again and again, the lamb. You remember how central a place it occupied in the ritual of the Jewish people, how familiar a sight it was to see a lamb being taken away to the Temple to be offered as a sacrifice for the sins of the people. Religious thought was instinctively right. You could not imagine it choosing the lion or the tiger as the symbol of its worship. That lowly feeling of dependence upon the infinite; that tender searching of the conscience, of repentance and prayer could find no more appropriate symbol where-

with to express itself than the symbol of the lamb. You remember when John the Baptist in a moment of inspiration looked upon Jesus of Nazareth, he said,—“Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world.” No one can think of the life that He lived, of the death that He died without feeling that the lamb was the true expression of His character, of His attitude towards God and man.

Right down the Christian centuries you know what a great place in its symbolism and its imagery the lamb has played. It is a symbol of weakness, of dependence, of sacrifice.

But I think we have over-stressed the passivity of the sacrifice of the lamb. When I read this wonderful book we call the Revelation, I notice that the lamb is spoken of twenty-seven times. But when I have finished reading the book the impression that is left upon my mind is not the passive sacrifice, but the strength of the lamb. It is stronger than the lion. It is the conqueror of the leopard and the bear. The lamb as it had been slain is seen in the centre, and the voice that cries that none is worthy to open the book save the lamb. The victorious saints “overcame by the blood of the lamb.” It is the victory of the lamb that the book proclaims, it is with the marriage of the lamb that the book closes.

Have we not misunderstood our Lord very largely when we have considered that His contribution was the contribution of sacrifice only? Did Christ lift the world simply because He lay down to be trampled upon? No! He lifted the world because about His gentleness there was a strength that was greater than

the strength of the lion. When He hung upon that Cross with drooping head, with the blood trickling from His thorn-crowned brow He was not the weakest in that multitude, He was the strongest. The very Roman soldiers at the foot of the cross bowed before Him; they who had spat in His face went away smiting their breasts, confessing their sin. There is a strength about gentleness which is greater than the strength of the lion. Right does not conquer wrong merely by lying down to be trodden upon. Right wins over wrong by refusing to take the same weapons that wrong uses, because you cannot beat the beast in the beast's own way without becoming a beast. You will not conquer the lion upon his own ground, except as you become fiercer than the lion. If you would outdo the tiger in fierceness you must become worse than the tiger. That is what we have been proving these last few years. How did we overcome the ruthless nation which sprang upon the world with the suddenness of the leopard, the dull brutality of the bear, the remorselessness of the lion? Alas in those unprepared moments we had no other means than to outbeast the beast. So we won what we call the victory, but we are beginning to discover that it was not the victory, it was only a tilt upward of the see-saw. The victory has still to be won, and we shall not win it until we win in the spirit of the lamb.

We have not yet begun or have scarcely begun to discover the strength of character. It has only just begun to dawn upon us that there are resources of power in the spirit of the lamb which are infinitely mightier than the spirit of the lion. We have scarcely

as yet begun to attempt to solve our problems by justice, and reason and law. We have said that the swiftness of the leopard or the deadly brutality of the bear, or the ruthless strength of the lion were symbols of a nation's greatness, yet all the time history proclaims with manifold voices that the nations which grow in power are after all the nations that serve, the nations that manifest patience and generosity. It is the victory of the lamb that is the only victory over the beast. It has taken us a long while to learn it, but we shall have to learn it in time or our children will have to learn it after us. The only way upward is the way of character, character that is strong within itself but gentle in its expression, which finds its ideal in service rather than in domination. The "Lamb slain from the foundation of the world" has taken hold of the world for that very reason, because of His power to go down to the roots of things. You cannot dislodge Jesus Christ from His central place in the history of the world because all the time He is bearing witness to those great and holy truths which as yet mankind has only seen dimly and afar off.

This is but one facet of that marvellous flashing jewel, the Cross. One feels ashamed to have spoken of the Cross and have said so little. You cannot exhaust its meaning. The Cross is like a great cut diamond with a myriad of facets upon which the light flashes from every angle. Let us try and catch this one beam of light this morning, that true strength is lamb-like in character. The tiger is only overcome in the end by that superior strength which looks into its eyes and quells its savageness. Sin, injustice, social

tangles, international quarrels are not solved in the end by the swift springing of the leopard, the slow brutality of the bear, or the relentless ferocity of the lion, but by the meekness which is anything but weakness and the capacity to receive and interpret that divine lamb-like spirit which endures from the foundation of the world and was manifested in Him whom we gladly own as Lord.

III

WHAT IS TRUTH?

TEXT: *John 18:37.* Pilate therefore said unto Him, Art Thou a king then? Jesus answered, Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end have I been born, and to this end came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Everyone that is of the truth heareth My voice! Pilate saith unto Him, What is truth?

THE men who wrote the Gospel stories did not write as dramatists would have written. They scarcely seemed conscious of their audience; there is no perceptible striving after effect; there is no massing of events to reach a great climax; there is little or no use of emotional words.

About this strange reticence there is doubtless a divine wisdom, for nothing palls upon us more than a stereotyped scene or dramatised emotion. Every man must paint his own picture and try to see these great things that happened so long ago. And this is how it seems to me it came to pass that Jesus said to Pilate:

“Every one that is of the truth heareth My voice,” and “Pilate said unto Him, ‘What is truth?’ ”

Pontius Pilate had been wakened up in the early hours of the morning, just about cock-crow, and had gone reluctantly out to deal with the angry mob which surged about his palace steps, for they were led by

men whose hostility he knew and whose power he feared.

He was in a sullen and angry mood. He disliked this Jewish people, over whom Cæsar had sent him to rule. They were the most turbulent race of which he had any experience. There was something about them which baffled and irritated him. The most ambitious, the most restless of all the nations with which he had come in contact in his campaigns, they were yet the most religious.

Pilate had a Roman soldier's contempt for religion. It is true he was superstitious; some unexpected event, some omen, a dream, the pronouncement of some oracle, could cause him to tremble, but as for religion—had he not seen hundreds of them? He had been in Egypt and Persia, through Asia Minor and in the Balkans—had seen hundreds of different forms of religion, and all seemed much alike. With all their prayers and mystic rites, none of these peoples had been able to stand up against the Roman legions. As for him, give him a legion of hardy veterans, shining armour, flashing spears, trusty swords, and a fig for all the religions in the world!

Yet these Jewish people baffled him, irritated him. He had tried putting them down by force, he had ridden rough-shod over their prejudices, but, so surely as he touched their religion, they rose against him, defenceless as sheep, but angry as wolves. It was all so illogical and absurd.

He looked at them now. It was like their bigotry, that they would not so much as set foot within the palace, because, forsooth, they counted it unclean, as a

court of the Gentiles,—they, the members of a subject race, were yet so arrogant as to regard Cæsar's Pretorium as an unclean thing. Nothing would do but that he, their Governor, must go out to them, taking no notice of their insult, and speak to them from the marble pavement. Verily it would have pleased him better to have sent a file of soldiers to clear them away from the place, but experience had taught him that it was better to swallow a great deal of insult from the Jews than to stir up their passions.

Therefore Pontius Pilate had gone out to them, and one glance was enough to show him that all this commotion concentrated in one solitary Man, whom they had thrust forward. Pilate's first impression was that He was perfectly harmless. He looked at Him with the eyes of a trained soldier; he looked first for sign of weapons. There was none. He was dressed in a simple white robe, open at the neck, and somewhat dishevelled with rough handling. His hands were securely bound behind His back. He looked for confederates. There were none. Every face was distorted with passion and set against the prisoner. Pilate shrugged his shoulders. A mouse in the talons of an eagle was not more helpless than this Man.

Such things had happened before, and had nothing to do with him. "What accusation bring ye against this Man?" said he.

He knew that they did not like him. There was a secret hostility always in their hearts ready to be manifested against him; they would as soon have his life as anybody's, and their reply was like a snarl, as

it came back,—“If He were not an evil-doer, we should not have delivered Him up unto thee.”

Once more Pilate looked at the Man. An evil-doer? He knew in an instant, for he was a trained observer of men, that this Prisoner would not have harmed a child, the honour of a woman would have been safe with Him, the wealth of the Indies would have passed through His hands undiminished. It was a pity to see Him in the clutches of this mob,—but then,—it had nothing to do with him.

“Take Him away,” he said, turning to go back into the palace; “take Him away and deal with Him according to your own law.”

Their answer caused him to turn back again and face them. They said, “It is not lawful for us to put any man to *death*.”

Ah, so that was what they wanted. Their looks betokened it surely enough. The blood-lust was in their eyes; they seemed to show their fangs as wolves do. He knew now why they had troubled him,—not out of personal respect, but merely to save legal consequences. They would make a convenience of his rank and official position, but woe be to him if he thwarted their desires. It was known to some among them, as it was known to himself, that his favour with Cæsar was very insecure. It was not easy to set this Man free.

Once more his eyes rested upon the Prisoner. His was the only calm face amid that seething sea of faces. And what a face it was. There was that about it which forbade Pilate to send Him to death, as he had sent many another in his time. He could not for the life of him act with his usual arrogance that day.

There came to Pilate an instinctive desire to get away from the madding crowd, and, unhampered by their prejudices and clamours, to be alone with this Man and speak with Him face to face.

He entered again into his palace and sat down upon the daïs in the seat of authority. He gave command that the Prisoner should appear before him. Quietly and with stately mien, Jesus moved to a position in front of the powerful Roman, and turned His deep and beautiful eyes full upon him. Outside, the impatient murmuring of the cruel crowd continued, and the sound was wafted into the Judgment Hall.

Pontius Pilate sat in his richly gilded chair of office, looking moodily at the white-robed figure of the Man who stood before him.

Around him were the marks of luxury and refinement. Costly tapestries hung before the walls, statuary adorned the apartment, his feet rested upon a rich rug that lay upon the polished floor.

He rested his chin in the palm of his hand, and looked into the face of the Prophet of Galilee.

For a moment there was silence; then Pilate's involuntary question surprised even himself:—

“Art Thou the King of the Jews?”

A faint smile came over the face of Jesus, as He said:—

“Sayest thou this of thyself, or did others tell it thee concerning Me?”

It was the first time Pilate had heard His voice.

Pilate was angry. The question seemed to him to

suggest that he had lowered his dignity enough to exchange opinions with that crowd outside. It was the Prisoner's own deportment that had made him associate the thought of kingliness with Him.

"Am I a Jew?" he asked contemptuously; "Thine own nation and the chief priests delivered Thee unto me: 'What hast Thou done?'"

There was a far-away look in the eyes of Christ, as if He were seeing into the far distances. At the base of His consciousness He heard the baying of the crowd that was thirsting for His blood, but His great soul was seeing "the joy that was set before Him," and His voice was musical and quiet as He said:—

"My kingdom is not of this world: if My kingdom were of this world, then would My servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is My kingdom not from hence."

A strange feeling of awe came over Pontius Pilate. He felt as he had felt in the presence of Tiberius, save for that dishevelled robe, the bound hands of the Prisoner, and that angry murmur of voices outside. It would not have seemed unnatural to have made an obeisance; then he said:—

"Art Thou a king then?"

And the deep eyes of Jesus rested upon him, as He answered in calm musical tones:—

"Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end have I been born and to this end came I into the world,

that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth My voice."

Pontius Pilate was looking into the eyes of the Christ, in the hush of that room, with a strange feeling about his heart he had not been conscious of before. He could not see what Jesus saw, for he was of the earth earthy. All his life long his passion had been for temporal power, for military power, for all the pomp and circumstance of official might. A rich palace, a sumptuous table, the command of armies; these were the breath of life to him. That which was only subordinate in the consciousness of the Master was very real to him. That crowd outside, with its implacable leaders, with its secret knowledge concerning his past, and its scarcely veiled threats of revenge. That was truth to Pontius Pilate.

And yet he could not withhold the homage of his soul from the Man who stood before him. He was impressed with a sense of spiritual realities, as he looked upon Him. He felt vaguely that this Prisoner had the truth of things. He could feel the attraction of this Man's splendour of character; he was not dead to moral appeal. But there was an appeal that was more forceful, more loud, more terrible. It was the appeal that came murmuring through the closed doors. There was that crowd outside. The thing that was remote to Jesus at that moment was the uppermost thing with Pontius Pilate,—that angry blood-thirsty crowd, seething at the base of the palace steps. What is kingship, if these are its subjects? What is truth, high spiritual truth, if force thus gives it the blatant lie?

Pontius Pilate, torn between the two feelings, shrugged his shoulders and said,—“What is truth?”

Two things kindle my imagination in connection with this incident. The first is that Jesus and Pilate were alone. Pilate had yielded to an instinctive feeling he had not analysed, when, instead of sweeping away this Prisoner with one wave of the hand, he had felt he must bring Him away from that seething crowd into the silence of the Hall of Judgment.

It is the miracle of Jesus, that He is alone with people. It is the testimony of men all down the ages that, somehow, Jesus Christ has a way of coming in from the crowd, Himself unique, alone, and finding a man when he too is alone.

And now what is truth? This is the question which has awakened the imagination of multitudes who have read this story. It chimes in with that restless seeking for that which corresponds with fact or reality, which seems to be life's keenest quest.

They had both used the word TRUTH. They were both truthseekers; they were both what Carlyle would have called “Sons of Fact.” Pontius Pilate was a son of fact. When he utters those words, “What is truth,” they seem to me to be autobiographical. One wants to know more about this man; one would like to hear the story of his life. There is something wistful about this saying; its very cynicism arouses your sympathy. You wonder through what he had passed before he could say that word with that curl of the lip. You seem to see him again as he used to be when he was a boy, when ideals soared before his mind and charmed his vision, and his untried soul went out purely to

wrestle with the world. Pontius Pilate's life had been passed in camps and in courts. He was a son of fact, keen, observant, critical. He had seen how things were done, how power and influence had triumphed over merit and truth; he had seen it, he knew it was so; and slowly he had surrendered to it, and now he was a son of fact. There was the crowd outside; there were the chief priests and other bitter implacable leaders. There were the subtle influences that would find their way to Cæsar's throne; there was something that would pluck him from his place and fling him down; it was fact; he knew it was fact.

Yet he could feel the power of the truth that Christ represented, and, if I mistake not, Christ was sorry for him.

"I find no fault in Him." That was his spontaneous verdict.

Sad that his deepest conviction should be in such irrevocable conflict with that blatant fact outside. What was the use of the innocence of this Man, when cruel power was at the door? Pilate shrugged his shoulders, therefore, and said, "I cannot help it; I am not responsible; I am sorry for the Man, but I must yield to the facts."

So he went out and faced the mob, and said these contradictory things:—

"‘I find no fault in Him at all,’ and (in hope of a weak compromise) ‘Ye have a custom that I should release unto you one at the Passover; will ye therefore that I release unto you the King of the Jews?’ but they cried out, ‘Not this Man, but Barabbas.’”

And, when that feeble subterfuge failed, Pilate surrendered to the truth as he saw it and said:—

“Take Him away and crucify Him.”

And Jesus was a Son of Truth. One knows not how to speak of Him with sufficient reverence. There is a mystery about Him which forbids any attempt at close analysis. We know not whence came that full-orbed vision of things which made His life so harmonious, but we do see that all His life long He was using His own eyes, thinking His own thoughts, making His own discoveries and, by His will and His personal power, bringing Himself into harmony with them.

And Jesus was a Son of Fact, too. He had looked calmly into the heart of life, and He dared to believe that the ultimate fact was a fact that should be reconciled with all things. He could not tolerate a fact of the intellect that was in conflict with the fact of the emotion. He could not tolerate a fact of the emotion that was not in harmony with the fact of the will. He had found His way through; it had been given to Him to see His way through; I know not how. He believed that, in the end, intellect and heart and will were to be reconciled; He saw life whole and braced Himself to it. To Him such facts as that of the crowd outside were but passing waves on the bosom of the great sea; they were not ultimate; they were not permanent. To Him the cross, with its shame and its anguish, was a far less repulsive thing than a lie.

To Him man was less than God. Jesus was a Son

of Fact; Pilate was a son of fact; they looked each other in the eye; and it seems to me that they have been doing that ever since. It seems to me also that about the main thing in life is to decide whose side you are on,—the side of Pilate or the side of Christ. It may be that a great part of our salvation consists in the seeing of these things, quite apart from the doing of them. For every man knows how difficult it is to hold on to the truth, as Christ saw it, in the midst of a life so full of blatant facts that contradict it. No sophistry can reconcile these two things; no preacher can charm away the facts of every-day life that have always contradicted the essential things of Christianity. That is just the centre of the conflict of life and, maybe, the ultimate thing is whether a man hauls down his flag before life's crude facts or whether he holds on in the midst of the conflict to the vision that Christ saw.

Pontius Pilate went out to the crowd, and the crowd swallowed him up. The world would never have heard of him again, if he had not once been alone in that room with Jesus. No man has ever appealed to him since for help or for succour. Pontius Pilate swayed over to the blatant facts of force and sin, and was engulfed by them.

Jesus Christ stood aloof from the crowd, and has been aloof ever since. Unique, alone, with that strange divine power which enables Him to go, as it were, into the secrets of men's lives with an appeal they cannot forget and they do not want to resist.

It is Jesus Christ who draws near to you when you are fighting your hardest fight. It is from Him there

comes inspiration and the strength to hold on, when the tide is setting against you. It is that kind of thing that makes it true when He said:

“Every one that is of the truth heareth My voice.”

That does not mean that you must count heads and see how many there are who call themselves Christians. Every time you or I stand for the thing that is noblest and best, we are in touch with Jesus Christ, and we know it. That is why the world can never forget Him; never get rid of Him. That is why He keeps hold of us as a race, in spite of our sins and our follies. One moral blemish with Him, and His power would have been broken; Jesus Christ, in His very loneliness, achieved His Empire.

No man who knows life, knows it truly, ever wants to speak as if he were a close follower of Jesus Christ. One reason of that change in our religious life that makes men so reticent about their faith is an increasing sincerity. Men cannot use now so glibly as our fathers did the great words of affirmation. Men who know what life is are slow to confess that they are Christians. It is not so with other religions. We do not find it so with Mohammedanism; every Mussulman will confess himself a follower of Mahomet, spread his praying-mat, and go down in the market-place and say his prayers to Allah. It looks very impressive, but it is not so impressive, after all, as that clearer perception of the truth of things that makes us most reticent concerning our discipleship and our faith in Jesus Christ.

But Jesus Christ can come where, I imagine, Ma-

homet never comes. He can come into the secret chamber of a man's soul just when the temptation is bitterest or the conflict is hottest, and the man hears, as it were, the eternal voice, to which he responds, and he knows that not in Pilate's cynicism lies the final answer, but in Christ's great appeal:—

“Every one that is of the truth heareth My voice.”

Rough men know this; soldier men knew it; knew it under conditions when anything like the religious life seemed impossible; but they *knew* it, and their knowledge was the supremest testimony to the grandeur of Christ.

Studdert Kennedy, who interprets the ordinary man's mind with insight, has one little poem which speaks of a soldier who fell asleep and dreamed. He dreamed he had passed into the other world:

“'Twere all men's face, yet no man's face,
And a face no man could see;
Yet it seemed to say, in a silent speech,
‘You did them all to me.’

“The dirty things you did to them,
The filth you thought so fine:
You did them all to me,’ it said,
‘For all their souls are mine.’

“And then, at last, he said one word,
He just said one word, ‘Well?’
And I said in a trembling voice:
‘Please can I go to hell?’

“‘You can’t; that hell is for the blind,
And not for those that see.
You know you have earned it, lad,
So you must follow me.

“‘Follow me in the paths of pain,
Seeking what you have seen,
Until at last you can build the IS
[With the bricks of MIGHT HAVE BEEN.’

“‘I’ve got to follow what I’ve seen,
Till this old body dies,
For I daren’t face, in the land of grace,
The sorrow of those eyes.”

IV

THE THREE CROSSES

TEXT: *John* 19:18. And with Him two others, on either side one, and Jesus in the midst.

THERE were three crosses on Calvary and without the three Calvary was not complete. We have erred somewhat when we have concentrated all our attention upon the central cross. There were three; not one of the evangelists has missed that fact; it had its deep significance. One cross, standing alone is an inexplicable thing, it does not reveal God fully, it does not satisfy the heart deeply; there were three and it is because there were three that that central cross was set up. It bears witness to the absolute identity of God with man.

Our fathers used to concern themselves with the mystery of the cross. To them it was of God's appointing before the foundation of the world, and the Master was destined to come to it because God had set it up. It puzzled them to explain their theory in terms of daily life. They had to answer the unanswerable question,—If the cross was set up there by the will of God, what then was the measure of guilt of those who brought Jesus to the cross? Was Judas truly guilty, if after all he was but fulfilling the eternal decrees of the Almighty? What was the measure of

Pilate's guilt if the cross was established by the fiat of the Supreme?

I want to say reverently, I do not believe God set up the cross,—man set it up. God set up the beauty, the truth, the righteousness, the love, the courage of Jesus Christ,—these things brought Him to the cross; the cross which was a sadly familiar object in those days; the cross upon which many men were done to death in those barbarous times. The efficacy of Calvary is not in the engine of death, it is in the Spirit of Christ, it is in the eternal Spirit which was behind and within the Christ.

Have you considered that after all those two malefactors were condemned to death by the same people and for the same reason as Jesus Himself? They were done to death, those two thieves, because it was believed that their lives and their activities were subversive of the State. Jesus was done to death for the same reason. The bitterness of the Chief Priests and the Rulers was engendered because they thought that His influence was damaging to the customs and institutions with which their own lives were bound up, and which they held, conscientiously enough, had been established by God. They were right. The influence of Jesus was subversive concerning those institutions. The final argument which they brought to bear upon the vacillating Pilate was that this Man claimed to set up an authority which was contrary to that of Cæsar, and though Pilate hardly believed it himself, they insinuated that if he did not give the word that condemned Him to death they would report that he was not true to his over-lord, to Cæsar. Pilate gave

Jesus to the same death as he gave the two thieves and for the same reason.

They were violently, blatantly antagonistic to the State, they had lifted up hands of rebellion; they were leaders of insurrection; they were perpetrators of robbery and he condemned them to death in the interests of the State. Jesus was not violent, He was no robber, He lifted no hands of rebellion against the State, yet His enemies were instinctively right after all;—there was that about Jesus which was infinitely more dangerous to the institutions of that time than the puny rebellion of such as these two thieves. From their point of view those three crosses were identical; they were all there because these three men were considered to be dangerous.

Jesus did not seek the cross, but He accepted it. He sought the Will of God, He sought the salvation of man. They threatened Him with the cross and He accepted it. There was no special merit in that method of death taken by itself. Jesus suffered "by the Eternal Spirit," as the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews said. He accepted the cross, and the cross in the wisdom of God became the symbol and the means of salvation.

Jesus took His place in the midst of the other two. He need not be separated from them. Theirs was the wrong way, His was the right. Theirs were checkered and sin-stained personalities; His was holy and true. If God was in Him as we believe, reconciling the world unto Himself, the great truth that lies in the heart of His passion is that God is identified with men; He comes down into the midst of the sons of men. If

they set up crosses God will take up His cross. It is not an absentee God we worship, it is an immanent God. Jesus crucified between two thieves bears witness to the identity of God with man even in his folly and in his sin.

That is a truth which is being pressed home to the conscience and the understanding of the world in our time with a greater intensity probably than ever before. It is the only truth that will save men and keep for them their religious faith. They have lost hold of that absentee God of whom our fathers seem to speak so often, and humanity, only too conscious of its own crosses is feeling out after the God who comes down into the midst of its own sorrows, takes one of its crosses for Himself and transforms it into a thing of glory and of love.

F. W. H. Myers has put into the lips of St. Paul very daring words which carry that thought:—

“Thou with strong prayer and very much entreating
Willest be asked, and Thou shalt answer then,
Show the hid heart beneath creation beating,
Smile with kind eyes and be a man with men.

“Were it not thus, O King of my salvation,
Many would curse to Thee, and I for one,
Fling Thee Thy bliss and snatch at Thy damnation
Scorn and abhor the shining of the sun.

“Ring with a reckless shivering of laughter
Wroth at the woe which Thou hast seen so long;
Question if any recompense hereafter
Waits to atone the intolerable wrong.”

The only answer to the bitter cry of the human heart in such a mood as that, is that God in Christ came down into the midst of man's crosses, the crosses of his folly, his sin and his rebellion, and taking the one that came to Him, was crucified between two thieves.

The three crosses bear witness to the refusal of the divine to accept a salvation which did not involve that of others.

"Save Thyself, come down from the Cross,"

was the cry of the multitude. It rang out in differing tones, uttered by differing moods. It was hissed out in bitter hatred by the Chief Priests; it was laughed out in scorn by the rough soldiers; it was whispered in pity by the stricken disciples,—

"Save Thyself, and come down from the cross."

Nobody was thinking of the two thieves upon their crosses! See how the multitude presses about the three of them. Nobody is concerned about the thieves, or cares whether they shall come down from their crosses or not. They hang, in a loneliness which is more bitter in the midst of a crowd than if it were in the midst of a desert. All eyes are upon the Son of God.

"Save Thyself if Thou be the Christ!"

And they did not know that even there on His right and on His left were two reasons why He could not save Himself.

What would you have Him do? Would you have

Him come down from His central cross and leave the two thieves hanging upon theirs? Would you have Him descend from His central cross and bring down too this bitter, rebellious impenitent one as well as the broken penitent one? Hear the cry of the impenitent thief himself:—

“If thou be the Christ save Thyself and us,”

and the Christ offered the only salvation that was possible for them as well as for Himself, by enduring to the end, ready to respond to the cry of the penitent thief that reached Him amidst His anguish in the darkness:—

“Lord remember me when Thou comest into Thy Kingdom.”

The cross has always been a stumbling block to men, it will always be a stumbling block. To many it seems incredible that the Son of God should so suffer, but I believe we are learning, and it is one of God's great truths for our time, that God Himself can only save by suffering, by bearing the burdens of the sons of men and being in all their afflictions Himself afflicted.

There were three crosses, and it is the three crosses that bear witness to the uniqueness of Jesus. To observe the uniqueness of Jesus, put Him with others; it is a mistake to separate Him. Theology has not served men much in the end in its endeavour to take Jesus of Nazareth and make Him altogether separate from the sons of men; to exalt Him above humanity with its temptations and its sins, to make Him as it were a shadowy unreality through whom God shone;

to refuse as though it were an impious thing that the human mind should compare Jesus with others.

Let Him be compared! It is when He is in the midst of others that He is unique. Put Jesus amongst the world's millions, say the best you can about them all. Do not as our fathers used to do, express depreciation of Socrates, Plato and the great souls who lived before or without knowing Jesus as though to credit them with the natural goodness which was theirs was somehow to undermine the majesty of the Christ and the efficacy of His salvation. Do not do that. Recognise the good wherever you can find it in this age or in any other age, in this place or in any place. Not only recognise it but seek for it as a diamond seeker seeks for his diamonds and be glad whenever you have found it. You will not depreciate the value of the cross, you will add to it. It was Jesus of Nazareth, standing amidst the sons of men, standing as He veritably stood in the days of His flesh without any adventitious conditions, without any ceremony or state, Man among men! who is the glory of God. You are getting nearer to God when you are really getting nearer to man. It is not that there is an inherent antagonism between the two, beside the antagonism that comes of human sin. Jesus is not less divine because He is so human. Let him be crucified between two thieves; they meant it in scorn. These narrow-minded bigoted Pharisees and Leaders thought they added to the sting of His cross, to the poignancy of His thorny crown when they took Him before whom their souls cowered as in the presence of a Master and set Him up in the sun between two thieves; this one with the

oaths and curses upon his lips only seemed to them in their folly and in their bitterness to add to the degradation of the Christ who hung so patiently in the midst. But let Him be. The world knows that though there were three crosses they who hung upon them were not the same, and this one in the middle was luminous with God. This one in the middle had the ages in His hand, this central cross was magnetic, it was to attract the world, hold the world, save the world. Let Him be in the middle! You do Him no service when you make the cross an ornament of gold and surround it with your ecclesiastical millineries. When you make the old blood-stained thing to be a gilded trinket, you dishonour it,—Let it alone! Rugged? Let it be rugged. Blood-stained? Let it be blood-stained. Scorned? Let it be scorned. They spat in His face? Let them spit in His face, they only shame themselves and not Him. The Christ with the spittle of His enemies upon His cheek is not degraded; you cannot degrade from without, degradation can only come from within. Let Him be in the midst. By all means teach men that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. I believe that, with all my soul; but He is all the more the Son of God to me because He is man as I am, flesh of my flesh, bone of my bone, buffeted, tempest-tossed, even as I am. Let Him be in the midst; the world has had a long while now to watch Him, question Him, believe Him, disbelieve Him, love Him, hate Him, obey Him, disobey Him. A long while now, but there is only one Jesus yet. There will not be another and in Him and through Him shines the glory of the Eternal God. God transformed the cross, He would have

transformed a gallows just the same. It was not the cross, it was the Christ who made the thing of shame to be a thing of glory, who made the hate and bitterness of men to reveal the love of God.

“O love of God, O sin of man!
In this dread act your strength is tried;
And victory remains with love;
Jesus our Lord is crucified.”

So sang a Roman Catholic Priest, and thus sang
Whittier, a Puritan poet:—

“O Lord and Master of us all!
Whate’er our name or sign,
We own Thy sway, we hear Thy call,
We test our lives by Thine.

“Thou judgest us: Thy purity
Doth all our lusts condemn;
The love that draws us nearer Thee
Is hot with wrath to them.

“To Thee our full humanity,
Its joys and pains belong;
The wrongs of man to man on Thee
Inflict a deeper wrong.

“Deep strike Thy roots, O heavenly vine,
Within our earthly sod,
MOST HUMAN AND YET MOST DIVINE,
THE FLOWER OF MAN AND GOD.”

V

THE INCOMPLETE PASSION

TEXT: *Colossians* 1:24. I Paul am made a minister; who now rejoice in my sufferings for you and fill up that which is lacking in the afflictions of Christ.

STRANGE that Paul of all men should suggest that there was something lacking in the afflictions of Christ, as though He had not suffered enough; as though He had not fulfilled the demands of God and of man in the passion on Calvary.

Of course when we know Paul we feel at once that whatever he meant he did not mean to suggest anything derogatory concerning the great Saviour or the power of His Cross. Words always derive their value from the character of those who speak them. They are like the notes of our currency, their ultimate value is the opinion of men concerning those who issue them. There are some men whose every word is like minted gold. There are other men who would need to speak thousands of words to reach the value of one word sterling. We who know Paul have read his letters, have seen his soul made bare by his own hand, know that there has never lived a man in this world who had a more tremendous reverence for Jesus of Nazareth and to whom His Cross was more wonderful in its glory.

"God forbid," said he once, "that I should glory save in the Cross of my Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me and I unto the world."

We may be sure that whatever St. Paul meant when he used those words he did not mean for one moment to detract from the value and the glory of the Cross on Calvary.

But it seems to me that Paul took a reasonable view of things when he suggested that even Christ has not done everything on the Cross of Calvary. There was something lacking even in His affliction. Paul could never have been betrayed into that extravagance of emotionalism concerning the death of Christ into which many Christian people often enough think it their duty to plunge, especially in this season of Lent. Paul had suffered too much as a servant of Christ not to know that physical suffering is limited, not to have discovered that the soul can triumph over the greatest pain and be its conqueror. You notice in this passage before us how Paul links together the ideas of rejoicing and suffering—"who now rejoice in my suffering for you." Paul had discovered that when a man suffers for a great and noble cause, though he may feel the pain bitterly, there is a triumph, nay, there is a joy that comes to the soul in such an hour that is unspeakable.

I am sure that Paul, for one, would never have pitied Jesus Christ in His passion upon Calvary.

If I were a painter I think I should like to paint the Crucifixion again. I am not satisfied with so many pictures of the Christ upon the Cross. It revolts me to see that sacred face marked with every

look of woe and of piteous appeal, as though He were saying to the sons of men—"Was there ever a sorrow like mine? I suffer for thee." I should like to paint the Christ, not without blood, not without pain, of course, but with the great soul looking out from the languishing eyes, seeing the ages unrolling before Him, conscious of His union with God, His identity with His Will; with the great Face all alight with joy unspeakable and full of glory.

I know it is a sacred subject and the tongue would rather be silent than speak concerning it. I know that the finer the soul, the more refined its sensibility; the clearer its vision of the world's need the greater must be its anguish. There was a poignancy about the Saviour's suffering about which the blaspheming thief upon his neighbouring cross knew nothing; it was not his world. Ay, but there was a bitterness about the dying thief's blasphemy with a broken and ruined life trailing behind it that was not in Christ's world. One was a broken and defeated thing, reviling in the midst of his defeat, the other was a triumphant soul, glorying and rejoicing in the midst of His anguish. The happiest soul on Calvary was that of Jesus. Mingled with His pain was unspeakable joy!

I think we have done our Lord injury in the eyes of men when we have exaggerated the physical pains of His passion. I think we have insulted Him when we have offered Him to the pity of mankind as though He were a broken outcast who needs must be received into the human heart out of sheer compassion. No! The Christ was never so grand as in

the hour of His travail. And His sufferings?—Oh, after all, was it not but nine hours the sun shone upon Him in the anguish of the Cross? Have not men suffered longer than nine hours, are there not some kinds of physical anguish which come to the ordinary sons of men that are as poignant and even more lasting than those of Calvary? No—that was not the glory of the Son of God; He is not the object of human pity, His claim upon the soul is not addressed to the compassions of men.

And there were limitations to the efficacy of His travail. There were people outside the sweep of Calvary who had never seen it and never heard of it, who could not be influenced by it, just as there are many people even now to whom Calvary is an unknown word, and were it known it would have no meaning.

It was Paul's wonderful Christology which enabled him to see that what happened at Calvary was only what is happening all the time, that the Cross is in the heart of God and that is why it was on the Hill outside Jerusalem. God made clear in Christ what had been His attitude towards the sin and folly of men and from the very beginning He has borne it upon His heart. If Calvary had never taken place the heart of God would have been the same, His attitude to men would have been the same, though men might not have known it. Calvary revealed to men the heart of the Unseen God, gave to them a new view of Him, brought Him nearer to them, taught them that He was bound up in the bundle of life with them, that when they sinned they smote at Him and that He bare the burden of their sin.

It is the greatest mystery in the world, the mystery we never fathom, it is a mystery that keeps us sane and reverent and helps us to love God. Were it not for Calvary we might forget Him, we might even hate Him. Calvary keeps its mystic fingers upon the chords of our hearts, haunts and purifies us with the thought of a great love that will not let us go.

Now when Paul faced the facts of his own life he saw at once that he must carry the spirit of Calvary into his own surroundings. When he heard the voice of the men of Macedonia in his dream saying, "Come over and help us," of what use would it have been for Paul to say, "But Jesus died on Calvary for you?" No use at all. Paul saw that the limitations of Jesus' life prevented Him appealing to the Macedonians. His habitat was Judea, His place of sacrifice was outside the walls of Jerusalem. He would have died as willingly for the Macedonians as He died for the Jews. He would have been crucified outside Philippi as readily as outside Jerusalem had it been possible. Jerusalem was the place where His life was cast, Jerusalem was that strange centre of religious influence that made the way, made the place, made the hour. The Christ offered Himself up at Jerusalem, not for Jerusalem only but for the world. Paul saw that if Macedonia was to be reached it was not enough to appeal to the sacrifice at Jerusalem, some one else must go in the spirit of the Christ and repeat in Macedonia in his own flesh what the Christ had done in Judea.

Paul felt that he went to fill up that which was lacking in the afflictions of Christ. You see, it was

the great thought that Jesus was still with him that made Paul what he was. That is the fundamental thing in Christianity as I see it. It is the question whether Jesus Christ is still alive. You will explain the resurrection conditioned by the limitations of your understanding and knowledge and experience; doubtless the truth transcends the explanation of your mind, but the question is, Is Jesus Christ alive now and always? Is He only a historical figure, fading away as the centuries pass on, or is His spirit still with men? Are we to live to-day, nineteen hundred years away from His earthly life, as if He were still alive in our midst? There was no question about that in Paul's mind. It was that which transformed him. He felt that while he himself was in the flesh, visible, corporeal, that the Master was with him, invisible, spiritual. Paul wanted to do in his flesh that which he felt the Master would have him do. When he saw the same kind of wrongs in Europe or some other place as those which brought about the Cross of Calvary, he wanted to face those wrongs in the same spirit as the Master had faced them at Jerusalem. When Paul saw great iniquities in the world that came down with crushing weight upon the sons of men he wanted to lift them with the same sacrificial effort as his Master had lifted them at Jerusalem. He did not put himself on the same level as his Master, the Master was to him a towering, snow-capped, cloud-piercing mountain. Paul was but a little mole-hill at the base of the mountain. It was not that he put his sacrifice on the same plane as the sacrifice of Christ, only he

did believe that the same spirit that was manifested at Calvary should be manifested in him.

So his life was a sacrificial life, and he was filling up so far as he could that which was lacking in the afflictions of Christ. Why, my friends, if Christ is eternal, if His Spirit is the never flagging Spirit of the eternal God do you not think He has suffered much more since Calvary than at Calvary? Those age-long crimes that have weighed down the sons of men, do you not think they have meant more to the heart of God than the physical anguish of those nine hours on Calvary? Was Calvary so bad as that great war of ours? I do not think so. I think He suffered more then than at Calvary. It is the great heart of the Eternal that is so wonderfully kind, that bears every wrong to the sons of men upon His own quivering tissue.

That is the truth that Christianity is trying to make clear; with halting words as it were, with vague shadowy outlines but with wonderful power and penetrating force, that is the truth that lies in the heart of the Christian faith. We men and women have got to learn that there is a Cross in the heart of God's world and that evil is removed in the end by the Cross.

I was very interested the other day in turning over the leaves of a hymn-book published by a Society which claims to be humanitarian but not especially Christian. It is labouring for the bringing in of a better social order, and I noted they had taken that hymn of the blind saint, George Matheson:—

"O Love, that wilt not let me go,
I rest my weary soul in Thee;
I give Thee back the life I owe,
That in Thine ocean depths its flow
May richer, fuller be.

"O Light, that followest all my way,
I yield my flick'ring torch to Thee;
My heart restores its borrowed ray,
That in Thy sunshine's blaze its day
May brighter, fairer be."

They had published that verse:—

"O Joy, that seekest me through pain,
I cannot close my heart to Thee;
I trace the rainbow through the rain,
And feel the promise is not vain
That morn shall tearless be."

But one verse they had left out:—

"O Cross, that liftest up my head,
I dare not ask to fly from Thee;
I lay in dust life's glory dead,
And from the ground there blossom red
Life that shall endless be."

They had left that out. Yes, they are always leaving it out! They want their Utopias, they want their better social orders, but they want it for the sake of getting more not giving more. They want the crown but not the Cross, and they will not see that the one thing that stands in the way of all our Utopias is the unwillingness to bear the Cross. It is the unwillingness to give, it is the refusal to in-

terpret life in sacrificial terms, that is where our Utopias always break down. The men who have made the world better than it was have always been the men who have carried the Cross in their hearts.

The Cross is not a strange and foreign thing. It is in the heart of things because it is in the heart of God. O God, forgive us, we are almost ashamed to use the word Sacrifice, it sounds so trite upon our well-fed lips, and yet we know the truth is there and it makes all the difference to a man's life in the end whether he has got such a vision of life as that he can see it not in terms of reward but in terms of sacrifice, whether he can spend and be spent for the good of his fellows, whether he can labour to bring in a better day by filling up on his part that which was lacking in the afflictions of Christ.

Surely the Lenten season means that kind of thing or it means nothing. Surely we had better give up celebrating it if we only mean to shed the tears of our vapid sentimentality about the Cross of Jesus Christ—the grandest, noblest, most triumphant thing this world ever saw! If we mean to defile that by our shallow sentimentality our fastings and our prayers, we had better give up celebrating the Lenten Season. What the Lenten Season really means is the glory of sacrifice and the validity of the life that carries the Cross and joy in its heart.

VI

THE GOD OF THE LIVING

TEXT: *Luke 20:38*. For He is not a God of the dead, but of the living: for all live unto Him.

IF Jesus had cared to descend to the intellectual level of those Sadducees he might easily have parried the point of this absurd story of theirs concerning the woman who had seven husbands. He might have questioned for instance its probability. One would not say it was impossible but at least it was improbable. Maybe it was merely an anecdote; who would care to enquire into the antecedents of an anecdote? If this story was something they had invented they were clever men; if it was something they had believed they were gullible men. Most likely it was a story they had partly heard and greatly augmented and they smiled to themselves when they presented it because they thought they had something here which would cut away the foundations of the religious claim.

Seeing again that they came to Him with satire He might have met them in the same spirit. I feel as if I myself could not have resisted the temptation of commenting upon the heroism of the seven men. To see them coming forward to the altar one after the other like sheep to the slaughter is an imposing sight. It is a heroism which seems to mount steadily upward

from that of the first to the fourth, fifth and sixth, until that of the seventh man is positively sublime!

Or the Master might have asked the question, Why drag the subject of the resurrection into such a story as that? Would not the problem be precisely the same if these seven men had not died at all? Suppose like Enoch Arden they had only changed their places of habitation, and come back to find she had pledged her troth not to one's self only but to six others, is not the problem as to whose wife she will be, precisely the same? Why drag in the resurrection at all? The Master we know on one occasion, met in the flesh a woman of Samaria whose condition was not very different to that of this alleged woman. He said to her, "You have had five husbands and he whom you now have is not your husband?" In other words she was a harlot, and if this woman was a real woman she would be little better than a harlot though each successive union had been sanctified by the rites of the Church. There is a legalised harlotry as well as an illegal, and relationships whether in this world or in the next depend upon affinity. One would not say it was not possible to love a second or third time, but seven times is going beyond all decency, and love if it were worth calling love, would have been so stretched and strained and have become so attenuated as not to be worth considering at all. Unless they had declined in wisdom why should they want to claim her as their own in the next world any more than they would have done in this?

But merely to suggest these ways in which the Master might had He chosen have met the satire and

subtlety of the Sadducees is to degrade Him. You feel at once that is the kind of line Jesus could not and would not have taken. He lifted this tawdry incident up to the heights of sublimity. He always did that. He spoke not so much to those crafty Sadducees as to that pathetic multitude behind them, not so much to the multitude as to the ages behind *them*, the ages which include you and me. He laid down at once this startling and striking thesis:—

“God is not the God of the dead, but of the living; for all live unto Him.”

I would like to stress that first clause: “God is not the God of the dead.” The moment you say there is anything dead you have minimised God. The dead need no God. If there be death, so far at any rate there is no God. If all the world be dead, why should there be a God? Materialism by a fatal necessity degenerates into Atheism, it cannot avoid the pit. Once talk of death, once blot out life with death and inevitably your faith in God diminishes. It is possible I know, to maintain some dim and hazy belief in a divine being who makes stars which are only to be burnt out and souls which are bruised into nothingness by blind matter, but it is not with your whole mind you picture Him. It is only by certain logical processes you do it; you have not used your will, you have not given play to your emotion, you have pictured by merely logical processes a most abhorrent, a most impossible being, one who flings dead worlds forever round his throne as we have seen jugglers flinging balls in the air and keeping them in motion.

We have regarded that as an illustration of perverted ingenuity. There is no God when once you yield to death.

Jesus said, and I think there were worlds of meaning in it as He spoke it:—"God is not the God of the dead." THERE IS NOTHING DEAD.

We have yielded in these last fifty years or more to a materialism which took us down, down, down, farther and farther into the pit, and that craving which seems to possess almost all men now to work their way back to a more spiritual interpretation of life is instinctive as well as logical. It is an effort of self-preservation. The world knows in its heart that if you yield to the sway of dead matter you have no God and you have no hope. The truth rather is that everything lives. The earth bringeth forth fruit "of herself," first the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear; therefore the earth is a living thing.

Henry Drummond, that great saint, in his day drew attention to what he believed was a chasm existing between the inorganic and the organic, but no man would take his stand at that point to-day. It is hard to believe now that there is a gap between the inorganic and the organic. There may be some links of the chain which for the moment are out of our view, but few men doubt now that the chain is there.

The farther you go back and the meaner the forms of existence or of matter seem to be, you do not diminish the wonder, but only increase it. Whatever was at the beginning of the Universe had in it, potentially at any rate, the present and the future. Matter itself is a spiritual thing. There is no dead thing in God's

Universe, it is all alive:—"He is not the God of the dead, but the God of the living." Creation is not a diminishing thing, it is a goblet that is filling to the brim with increasing life; "God," said Jesus, "is the God of the living."

He spoke of Abraham to those Sadducees. Abraham was as they said, dead. He had been dead for centuries and yet every man of them, Sadducees, Pharisees and the people generally called themselves the sons of Abraham. In the days when Abraham lived in the flesh he had difficulty in qualifying to be called a father at all. Ishmael was the child of his despair; Isaac, the solitary child of his faith, was born when Abraham was a hundred years old, and as Paul said long afterwards, "as good as dead." It was with the greatest difficulty in the days of his flesh that any one person could call Abraham father, and lo, here they were, tens of thousands of them, all claiming to be his children, believing that the family of Abraham was yet to increase, that maybe the day would come when all the world would acknowledge him as father. Though their dreams were never historically fulfilled, yet it is a fact to-day that every Jew upon the earth calls Abraham father, every Christian and every Mohammedan upon the earth likewise calls him father,—strange that you should speak of a man as living when he had but the slightest claim to fatherhood, and as dead when myriads of his spiritual children acknowledge him.

Here in this City Temple to-night, there are some two thousand of us worshipping God. I venture to think that nine hundred and ninety-nine parts of this service are contributed by those whom we call dead.

Who are we? Blown in here upon the winds as it were for a few transient moments. What have we to do with the City Temple? This is a place that is full of the dead. It is instinct with the personality of Joseph Parker, who is dead; it is thrilling with the influence of Campbell and Newton, who are no longer here. Most of the hands that built this place, laying brick upon brick, stone upon stone, are stiff and still in the grave to-day. These hymns that we have been singing, who gave them to us? Those we call dead. This Book that ever lies as the central object upon this desk, what is it? It is the living essence of the dead, the great, grave, godly dead, the men of faith and intuition; they live still! I am but a poor stammerer who strives to repeat their words, Oh, this Book! There are millions who have part in it, it is all wet with the tears, it is all pulsating with the hopes of millions more. They are all there,—Tertullian, Augustine, St. Francis of Assisi, Savonarola, Calvin, Knox, Wycliffe, Tyndale, Coverdale, Wesley, Bunyan, Howard, Whitefield,—these and millions more who are all as you say dead. We who live are the last, the least, the foam upon the face of the illimitable deep.

These lives that we live, are they not far more the continuation of theirs whom we call dead than merely our own? The words that we use day after day, which one of them is your word? Not one. They were coined for you, fashioned for you by those you say are dead. You cannot even express what is in your mind, nor let it trickle over the threshold of your lips without borrowing prodigally from those whom you call dead. Oh, the arrogance of it, that we sweep

them all away, say they are all dead, and we only are alive.

That word LOVE. There are a thousand million heart-throbs in that one word. I have only got the merest modicum of right to that word. It has been made by the multitude whom I, in my arrogance, speak of as if they were dead. These laws, customs, institutions of ours,—are they our fashioning, or have they been fashioned for us? This old grimy city of London,—its population is not six or seven millions, it is six hundred millions! You cannot walk along Holborn or Fleet Street, but whether you know it or not you are passing by or passing through myriads of those who made those places what they are. Human history is a pyramid, each successive generation represents the last and narrowest tier upon it. Every race that has existed in this world has made its contribution to the pyramid of life. Rome, Greece, Carthage, Babylon,—they are all there. If they had been different we would have been different. If Romanism had been different, Protestantism would never have been born. If Protestantism had been different in its beginnings we might never have been here at all. You must either think of a God whose creation is diminishing so that constantly it narrows as it were to a point and becomes less and less until finally it would not be worth being God to, or you must think of a creation that is all alive, and a God who is not the God of the dead but the God of the living.

I know what you are saying in your heart. You are saying, "that is casuistry, you are playing with words." A young student said to me recently, "I do

not believe in a personal immortality, but I believe that we live on by the influence we exert." Yes, but does not influence need a God to care for it? Is not influence greater than men themselves? If living men need a superintending God, what about influence?—the thing that grows and grows continually, the thing you never know how to check. Influence? That is the greatest thing in the world. Influence! When William Shakespeare lived he was not known out of England, his life was so obscure that even now after ceaseless investigation you can hardly be sure of its outlines, but William Shakespeare's influence is infinitely greater than William Shakespeare himself. Influence? If I were asked who caused the great war I would not say the ex-Kaiser Wilhelm, nor Von Bethmann-Holweg, nor Von Moltke, nor Hindenburg,—I think I would say two men who are dead. Napoleon in France and Bismarck in Germany, and they are both as you say, dead. Napoleon, who by his ruthless trampling upon and crushing of the divided Germanic peoples caused them to strive for the accomplishment of a national unity, which was never achieved until Bismarck carved it one by the sword. These are the men; they are dead you say, but their influence lives.

Maybe the Christian religion is right after all in the suggestion it makes that the judgment is the last thing of all. No man is ready to be judged until the world is done with, because his life is not over, his influence is still affecting other men for good or ill. Influence? Tell me, as you must tell me, that there is such a thing as living influence, and I say there must be a God to be cognisant of it, to take notice of it, to judge

it. Influence? When does a deed live? When you do it or afterwards? The blow you strike in anger, takes but a second, but for years afterwards you are thinking of it, dealing with it. When does a word live? A word unspoken is like a babe unborn, you know not whether it is male or female, dark or fair, tall or short. Your unspoken word is as a babe unborn, but once spoken it must live out its life.

The sin committed in one wild moment of passionate self-will, does it die with the passing of that moment? No, not for fifty years after maybe.

The truth rather is that nothing lives until it is "dead." You do not know what childhood is until childhood is gone. Children never explain themselves, they only live and love and laugh. The knowledge we have of childhood we owe mostly to the mind of maturity philosophising upon what it no longer possesses.

You do not know what youth is until middle age dawns upon you and you begin to look back and analyse its sentiments and investigate its fires. Then you discover what you mean by youth,—when you have lost it.

Maybe we never know what life is until it is gone or almost gone. The old man and the old woman are living upon the past. The long tale of the past is their real life and it never was so real to them as now when it has gone. *Influence?* Oh, there are lives that have touched yours and mine that are more powerful now they are silent in the grave than they ever were while they lived. I had a Mother. She could not give me much, but she gave me love and vision, and life swept

me away from the shelter of her roof very early. The vast distances of my native land swept me five hundred miles away from her. I travelled a thousand miles to get her parting blessing. You say she is dead, I know better! She lives, and never lived so fully and so richly as now. God is not the God of the dead, He is the God of the living, and all live unto Him. His creation is a foaming goblet which ever fills more and more up to the brim, otherwise I would pity God if I could believe in Him at all.

These lives of ours are to be measured not by the length of their days but by the persistence of their influence. The fact is, if we want to live truly at this moment we must live with the future moments still in view. We should live better if we thought of those who are not yet born as already alive, although the door has not yet been thrown open which reveals them to our view.

That is no true statesmanship which has not its eye upon the closed door of the future out of which the sons of men are to come presently. The statesmanship which only concerns itself with the minority whose votes fall into the ballot-box is not true statesmanship. There is a constituency whose votes are not counted by the scrutineers but who are all final arbiters—it consists of those who have already marched past and those who are yet to march.

The religion which only concerns itself with the present is not a true religion. The true religion must comprehend the past and open the way for the future. You must keep your eye upon the unborn, shape your teaching, direct your activities and fashion your insti-

tutions not to preserve the limited knowledge of this generation but to open the way for those who are to come after. You must keep yourself clean if for no more valid reason than that there are those who are not yet born who will bless you if you were clean, and curse you if you were unclean. Life is a growing thing and men build themselves into it. God's purposes do not diminish but increase by the complexity and manifold inter-communication and inter-relationship of that vast flood of life which is pouring forth from His exhaustless heart.

Not the God of the dead but the God of the living.

Jesus Christ Himself is dead, nobody asserts that more earnestly than Christian people themselves. Sceptics have wanted to say that He did not die, or at least did not die at the time when they said He did. The Christian has laboured to make it credible that He did die only because He intuitively knew that out of His death would come life. He lives because He died.

For me immortality is not merely a thing of the world to come. I do not believe I am a man of the flesh now and will be a pale shadow yonder. I do not think God wants pale shadows either in this life or in the life to come. I dare to believe that existence in the great Beyond is as valid and as palpable and as compact of experience of mind and heart and soul as it can be in this present world. I do not believe that God has created myriads of worlds to be unoccupied. I do not believe He has exhausted the capacities of human life upon this little planet, in this fevered checkered existence between the cradle and the grave.

I dare to believe He is the God of the living, and to ask you to live as those who will never die. There is nothing you ought to do if you can help it that you would be ashamed to meet by and by when your sight shall be clearer and your judgment truer. If you would live well for the moment, live for eternity. If you would do true deeds do those deeds by God's grace that will become sweeter in your memory and more potent in your after experience.

“Live for those who love you,
For those who think you true,
For the Heaven that lies above you
And awaits your spirit too.

“For the cause that needs assistance
For the wrong that needs resistance,
For the future in the distance
And the good that you may do.”

VII

THE CREDULITY OF INCREDULITY

TEXT: *Acts 26:8*. Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you that God should raise the dead?

I QUESTION if ever there was a speech delivered in this world under more adverse conditions than those which accompanied this one of Paul's. I have been making speeches since I was seventeen years of age; I think perhaps there are few people in London to-day who speak in public more often than I do. It grows upon me increasingly that the effectiveness of a speech depends upon many conditions, most of which are outside the man himself. Nothing is more important than the state of mind and heart of the people to whom the speaker is addressing himself. Consider the atmosphere that surrounded the Apostle Paul—

He had been a prisoner for more than two years, beating out his great heart in a close and confined room while the world was waiting for his message. There had been and there were a number of people who sought his death, sought it relentlessly and unreasonably. Two years ago they had tried to persuade the Procurator Felix to make away with him, but Felix, supposing that Paul because he handled much money therefore possessed much money, kept him in prison, hoping for a bribe, until political conditions

changed and Felix himself went away. When the new Procurator, Porcius Festus, came into power, those inveterate enemies of Paul's, who were the chief men of the city, thought their chance had come, and besought Festus to sentence him to death.

Porcius Festus appears to have been one of that type of government official who stand upon technicalities. He had no personal interest in Paul, but he saw the weakness in the case for the prosecution. They had no distinct charge to bring against this man, and he would fain have released him if Paul himself had permitted it. But Paul had made his own appeal to Cæsar and Festus, since he could not pass him on to Cæsar without a distinct charge to bring against him, thought to shift the responsibility from his own shoulders to those of Agrippa, who had now come into the city, at the same time maintaining his own popularity with the chief men who hated Paul so bitterly.

Now comes Agrippa and with him Bernice. Could you imagine two people before whom it would be more difficult to make a religious speech? I would not stain my lips nor your minds with a description of the things that were said about them both. Worldlings they were, and nothing else. They had consented to see this man Paul to while away a pleasant hour and to satisfy some little curiosity.

There then are the chief men of the city—bitter enemies; there is Porcius Festus, spineless government official; there is Agrippa and his sister, moral degenerates; and there are the chief captains in their robes of state, glittering with decorations and orders. And lo, there is Paul himself, brought for the moment out

of an incarceration which had lasted two long years, with the shackles still upon him. Could you imagine a man making a speech under conditions like that? Could you expect him to unbare his great soul and tell of the sacred things that had come into his life, of the long hours of wrestling and of prayer that he might know and do the will of his Master? Such an address was impossible. Could you imagine him putting forth reasons in logical form for that great belief in the resurrection of Jesus Christ which had transformed his own life? Here was no atmosphere, here was no audience! Conceive of him bringing forth the traditional arguments for that great historical event. Incredulity sat upon every face, the incredulity of hate, of meticulousness, of moral depravity, of sycophancy. They would laugh him out of court, they would scorn his closest reasons. What kind of speech could the Apostle make in such an atmosphere as that?

I have read this speech over and over again; I think I can to some extent enter into the mind of Paul. That kind of speech was impossible to him; there was only one defence that would do; it was offence, and in a moment he whom they questioned had become the questioner. He flung before those whose minds were bent upon him with intent to condemn, the searching question:—

“Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you that God should raise the dead?”

The speech that followed is not an argument at all, it is a simple piece of testimony, it is the story of his life, the tale of how the great influence had come to

him and what he had done in the power of it. Presently his eyes began to glow, his speech became fervent, his body quivered, as he told the strange tale of the things he had seen and what he had endured in response to the heavenly vision.

When he was in the full flow of his speech, Porcius Festus broke in and said:—

“Paul, thou art beside thyself; much learning hath made thee mad.”

That was the biggest compliment *he* could have paid to Paul. That a man like Porcius Festus, who had sacrificed truth and right for the sake of mere material prosperity, who would keep in favour with the most irreconcilable elements rather than take up a stand for the truth, should consider from his point of view that Paul was a madman was the sublimest compliment it was in his power to pay. That was the best kind of testimony after all that this story of St. Paul's was a valid story, for it had permitted him to live a life that was inexplicable to Porcius Festus.

When Agrippa and Bernice and the rest of the assembly drew aside to talk together, their verdict was, “This man hath done nothing worthy of bonds or of death.” That was *their* best tribute to Paul! That this man, whom others had persecuted, had never retaliated; that he who had become the leader of a new party with ramifications throughout the known world, and whose word was obeyed, had never used his influence for the overturning of society or for the bringing about of a revolution; that this man, through whose hands had passed unchecked the lavish gifts of Chris-

tian folk for the poverty-stricken in Jerusalem and other places, had never touched this money for himself; that he had carried himself through, and had done nothing, amidst unusual conditions, worthy of death or of bonds, was the best tribute they could pay.

There on the face of it stands a witness to the kind of effect which the belief in Christ and the life beyond has upon men. It keeps their hands clean and their hearts pure, yet inspires them to live the kind of life which according to low worldly standards is eccentric and even insane. Paul had made perhaps the most skilful apologetic he could possibly have made in the presence of an utterly unsympathetic and hostile audience.

Paul was right too because he perceived in that moment that incredulity has its difficulties as well as credulity, that all the defence should not be upon the part of faith since unfaith has greater problems than faith. The marvellous thing about the Faith is that it has drawn the fire of the world and survived. I wonder if you ever consider what an unfair advantage the unbeliever seems to have over the believer. The believer is compelled to defend a definite point, a distinct thesis. The unbeliever may roam all round the entrenched place and choose his point of attack. The faith that is bound up in Christ has stood for nineteen centuries defending the same few great theses. All the thought of the world, the hostility of the world, the despair of the world, the growing knowledge of the world has surged around it again and again. Every point has been attacked, every postern gate has been assaulted. That the Faith should be still standing,

after nineteen hundred years, is a great tribute to its validity and vitality.

Yet it is unfaith which has the greater defence to make after all. It is well sometimes that we Christian folk should perceive clearly that we are not always bound to be upon the defensive. If our proposition be not true, let us hear the explanations of those who deny its truth.

Twenty years ago or more Dr. Parker preached from this text in this pulpit, and in his own original and characteristic way he broke that passage off in the middle and rendered it like this: "Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you that God . . .?" Ah, that is the word that makes the difference! If there be no God why talk about a life beyond? You have enough to do to explain the present life. We need not ask your reasons concerning a life beyond; you have enough to do to explain a blade of grass; give us your explanation of that without God, and we shall be glad to hear your continuing explanations. It is that word GOD that makes the difference.

But if God be there, any kind of God, why should it be thought a thing incredible that He should raise the dead? Of all the wonderful things upon which we may look is there anything to be compared with the wonder of life? Even taking into account all this far-flung starry universe, with its thirty millions of stars that we can see, is there anything, can there be anything, more wonderful than life? What are worlds compared to that? Is not that the supreme thing, and if there be a God and if there be life, why should it be thought a thing incredible that this most wonderful thing should

outlast and defeat the things that are less than itself? I know that the odds are against life. All men die. We who are alive are but a small minority of the race; the great majority have passed on before. I know there are lots of contemptible things that could destroy me—some wretched fever germ which, if I could see, I should loathe; some cowardly blow in the dark, some brutal assassin's bullet; some wretched unforeseen accident in the street or on the railway—I know that the odds are against me; I cannot keep my life for twenty-four hours without having passed through incredible perils. If I could see them all with open eyes it would demand my utmost courage to maintain the fight. But I also know that these things are less than myself—I am greater than the assassin's blow, I am greater than the fever germ. I know I have not lived for nought; I have not hoped and believed, loved, suffered and striven, seen visions of the glory, fought through the storm and endured through the flame; I have not done these things without knowing I am greater than that which is against me. If you tell me,—“There is a God who yet sacrifices the best He has made to lesser and contemptible things,” then I say “I am sorry for that God—the meanest man I have ever met is ethically superior to Him.”

Let it once be said there is a God, and why should it be thought a thing incredible with you that He should raise the dead? Has He made this mighty universe only to roll on in its blind unknowingness, crushing out the mind which alone can give value to it? Surely not! The greatest things will persist, the greater will overcome the lesser, life will win out over

death. It is the thought of God that makes the difference.

Yet when we think of life beyond the grave it is not mere continuity we desire. If the continuance of life be only like the present life and no more, who would desire it? Paul is not arguing about the resurrection in general terms, he is thinking of one sublime figure among the sons of men; he is thinking of Jesus Christ. His faith and hope is bound up with Him, and really I confess that, when I think of a life beyond, the supreme question in my mind is what of Jesus Christ? It is not that He stands absolutely alone; I have seen some others who were like Him in their measure. I have seen, have you not, great brave souls who have loved an ideal, striven for it and lost? I have seen, I have read of those who stood for the truth amidst flaming fires and bitter traducings; I have seen human life rolling like the billows of the ocean—young, lusty, beautiful, promising life—rolling, rolling on, flinging itself upon Fate like the wild billows against the cliffs of Dover, because every mother's son of them was seeing a vision of a better world, the triumph of the Right and the persistence of the True. To me they are shadows of that central life among the sons of men which has so fastened the eyes of men, gripped their consciences and inspired their souls, that central life of Jesus Christ. I want to know, in the beyond, what about Him? Supreme on earth, will He be supreme there? I do not want to define the nature of His Being, I do not want to take my tiny cup of understanding to measure infinity; I only want to know whether He who lived the purest life that ever man lived, who

faced the biggest odds that ever a royal soul faced, who went down into the bitterest depths of shame and loss into which any man could go, whether, beaten as He seemed to me, He shall be triumphant yonder? Are the scales always weighted against the great and the true; are moral questions always left unsolved; is the great soul always the prey of the jungle mind? No! If Jesus Christ be raised from the dead, light will overcome darkness, right will conquer wrong, mercy will endure to the end. When Paul anchored his faith in the Christ and believed that He lived, it is no wonder that his life was changed, it is no wonder that he revalued his values, that he, with his own will, shattered the accomplishments of his earlier life and went out to face the perils of the world because he believed in the eternal rather than the temporal, in the true rather than the false, caught the spirit of the Christian heroism, while his character was changed as those of multitudes of others have been changed.

If you can believe in a God at all, who is not inferior to yourself, that the holiest aspirations you are conscious of are not superior to His, but only sparks from the fire of His Being, if there be a God at all why should it be incredible that the holiest things you know, that you have never dared give expression to because they seemed so holy, which you hide in your innermost heart, and almost feel a pain when other people speak of them, are but the sparks that fly from the furnace of His Being? If not, why not? If not, what explanation have you got to give without God, without a holy God, without a wise God? How do you explain yourself, how did you become bigger than

your God, how did you become bigger than your negation of God? Whence came the effect of which you are conscious if the Cause be not the flaming heart of Him whose name is Love?

It is not we Christians who have the incredible thing to maintain, it is the incredulous man who is surrounded by anomalies and perplexed by unsolvable problems. It is not mere continuity of life, it is increasing quality of life for which we crave.

“’Tis Life whereof our nerves are scant,
More Life and fuller that we want.”

And the Christian, like all other mortals, has not an absolute truth, yet he has seen the open door, the green fields beyond, the illimitable landscape, and the throne of the King. He dares to believe he has discovered resources for heroism, a latent capacity for divinity, faith and hope and love, without which the world is nought but a wilderness.

“There’s a fancy some lean to and others hate—
That, when this life is ended, begins
New work for the soul in another state,
Where it strives and gets weary, loses and wins:
Where the strong and the weak, this world’s con-
geries,
Repeat in large what they practised in small,
Through life after life in unlimited series:
Only the scale’s to be changed, that’s all.
Yet I hardly know. When a soul has seen
By the means of Evil that Good is best,
And, through earth and its noise, what is heaven’s
serene
When our faith in the same has stood the test—

Why, the child grown man, you burn the rod,
The uses of labour are surely done;
There remaineth a rest for the people of God;
And I have had troubles enough for one."

It is not the mere continuity of life, it is increasing fulness of life that we assert in the name of Christ.

"Now we see through a glass darkly, but then face to face; now we know in part, but then shall we know even as also we are known."

Now abideth Faith—challenging, baffling, but not incredible; Hope—denied, deferred, beaten, but not incredible; Love—soiled, stained, lost, broken, but not incredible!

"Now abideth Faith, Hope, Love, and the greatest of these is Love."

VIII

TO ALL NATIONS

TEXT: *Luke 24:28*. He appeared to be going further, and they constrained Him saying, Abide with us for it is toward evening and the day is far spent.

IT is perhaps the most beautiful of the post-resurrection incidents. Only that exquisite story in the 20th chapter of St. John of the meeting of Jesus with Mary Magdalene can compare with it for sheer beauty of literary expression. The words of the text have become more than familiar to us, they have become sacred. It is upon them that one of the most beautiful of our hymns has been based.

“Abide with me, fast falls the eventide
The darkness deepens, Lord with me abide
When other helpers fail and comforts flee
Help of the helpless, O abide with me.”

If Henry Lyte had done nothing else in life but write that hymn it would have been worth while for him to have lived. Yet beautiful as the hymn is, it is in part based upon a misinterpretation of the text. Our translation reads, “He made as though He would have gone further,” which suggests that Jesus made pretence of going further waiting to be asked to abide. There is no doubt as to the real meaning

in the original record when we come to look at it. "He appeared to be going further." He appeared to be going further because He was going further, the appearance was in accord with the fact, but they constrained Him, saying, "Abide with us."

It had been dawning upon them though as yet they had not put it into words, that He with whom they had been conversing was the Master. It seemed as though the day were breaking, but to lose Him again would seem as though the night had fallen. It was the fear of darkness within their hearts that made them see its image in nature around them and as they saw the red sun sinking to the west they said to Him, "Abide with us, for the day is far spent, and the night is at hand."

It is pathetic, though it is exceedingly human to notice that the uppermost thought in the minds of the disciples after the resurrection, was to restore if possible the old associations, to bring Him back to them, that He might be with them as before, to have once more the sacred fellowships that the cross had seemed so ruthlessly to break. That was their first and mastering impulse. But Jesus was going further. Though He turned on that occasion at their urgent constraining and sat down with them for a while at the table, it was only that He might speak peace to their hearts and establish their faith, for in the same moment that their eyes were opened and they knew Him, He vanished out of their sight. He was going further.

They did not understand that it was impossible to bring Him back. The wonder had been all through those marvellous years that He had not as it were taken

unto Himself wings and flown away to that realm to which He seemed to belong, but when once He had broken through it was impossible to bring Him back. To have merely resuscitated Jesus, for Him to have taken up again the old life with His old friends would have been an anti-climax. Once He had broken through there was only one thing to do, He must go on, and they must learn to worship an invisible Lord.

You have suffered, many of you, you have had fellowships broken, you would fain bring back your loved ones. Did you ever really try to think it through? It cannot be. They would not be just the same. If you would continue that thought read again Browning's poem "An Epistle, Containing the Strange Medical Experience of Karshish the Arab Physician." It is written to his old tutor concerning Lazarus whom he is supposed to have met after he had risen from the dead. You will perceive, as the poet wants you to perceive, that you cannot push the oak back into the acorn. You cannot bring back into the shackles of mortality the life that has once broken through. If you did it would not be the same life.

It was with Jesus only as it is with your loved ones. He came back to help you to trust. He came back to give you added assurance. He came back to make credible to us that mystic truth that when we pass on into the beyond we are not utterly different from what we are here. Even the body plays its part, the spiritual body is preserved, and they whom we have known and loved, are still as we have known and loved. He came back to make that credible; He came back to whisper it to the heart of the race, but when He had

whispered it, He would not have an anti-climax,—in mercy He went on further.

It was always in His heart to go further. In the days of His flesh He was cramped, cabined, confined within the limitations of time and space. He was going further. He had already come a long way when He appeared in Bethlehem. He had come down the ages by the Will of God, out of the heart and mind of God. He was going on through the ages by the Will of God unto the ultimate consummation of the purposes of God,—He was going further.

You notice in every recorded instance of His return to His disciples after the resurrection, there is that element of vanishing. He led them as far as—Bethany. Led them back over the old familiar track, led them to the little village that was so sacred to them, so fragrant with memories;—made them to know that Bethany was en route for eternity. He led them as far as—Bethany, and then while He blessed them He was taken from them.

Life is like that. We are always being led as far as some point or other in life from which we must go on alone. You take your baby and lead him as far as some point from whence he has to go on alone. You teach him to walk. You stand by him while he makes his first expedition, his wonderful journey from one chair to another. You never forget the day when the baby first walked, but the day comes when he must walk without you. You lead him as far as school and then he passes into other hands besides yours. You take him as far as business, and then you say to him, I have done what I could to lead you, to establish you,

to teach you the right and the wrong, now you must go on. You lead him as far as the marriage altar, and then you step back and allow new circles of influence to be flung around him. You will stand by him as far as the evening time of your own life, and then you will say, "You must go on, I cannot go with you further."

Life is a continuous succession of fellowships that carry us to a certain point, and then a great crisis comes in which we have to make a real step in faith and go out into the unknown. Life would not be life if it were not like that. Life would be a mere tutelage, a mere school-boy's existence if it were not for that. You could not make a man that way. You only make men by bringing them to the point at which they step onward from the known to the unknown. Life itself is going further. The heart of man is torn between two impulses, the impulse to rest and abide, and the impulse to go on alone, to explore. The tragedy of our religious history has been just in the conflict between those two cravings. So soon as there has been a manifestation of the blessing and power of God, the hearts of the disciples say, "Abide with us,"—but He is going further.

The Church has lost step with the race many times because she said in her heart, "Abide with us," when God was going further. Over and over again you can see it down the track of history how God as He moved on further and led the race with Him has seemed to be breaking up the old associations, has left men's hearts in fear, has left them when the sun was setting and the evening shadows were wrapping them round, and they have tried to constrain God saying unto Him, "Abide with us."

And the secret is, you cannot have an abiding God unless you let Him go further. An abiding God is a stagnant God, an abiding experience is a stagnant experience. God is marching on, march on with Him. He leads you as far as—Bethany. Never lose touch with the historic; never lose touch with the historic Jesus I beg of you. If you do your house will fall about you like a house of cards. Keep close to the historic Jesus but perceive that He is going further.

Our fathers used to talk a great deal about the conflict between Science and Religion. There is no conflict. Science is Religion, and true Religion is Science. Whatever is true is of God. If it seems to break up your conventional religion, so much the worse for your conventional religion. Get square with the truth!

Time was in the days of those who are older in the congregation when the minds of many religious men quailed before the evolutionary conception of life. We do not quail now, but our fathers did.

There is a story told of how Huxley was once addressing a meeting when a certain Bishop whose name I shall not mention was in the chair. He was facetious, glib, eloquent, and turning upon Huxley he said,—“Was it on your grandfather’s or your grandmother’s side that you descended from a monkey?” Huxley remained silent and when his turn came to speak spoke quietly, and reasonably about the truth as he saw it, but in one sentence towards the end he said,—“I should not be ashamed to have a monkey for an ancestor, but I should be ashamed to be connected with a man who used great gifts to obscure the truth.” That was a well deserved retort. Do not

obscure the truth, and especially do not obscure it in the name of God for that is blasphemy. Get square with the truth so far as you may know the truth. Believe that God is going further, go with Him. Walk with Him so far as Bethany. Plant your feet in the sacred soil, kneel with reverence before the places upon this old earth where His foot-prints were made visible, but do not try to tie God down to those points in space and those moments in history.

The time will come yet when we shall discover that one of the principal elements in vital religion is constructive courage, and when we have made that discovery we shall begin to shorten the distance between the Christ and ourselves.

Begin at Jerusalem, He said, but preach the Gospel to all nations. Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel, that is the glad tidings, to every creature.

St. Francis of Assisi was simple enough or wise enough to believe that that even included the brute creation. Legend says that he preached to the birds and the wild beasts, addressing the wolf as Brother Wolf. That may have been a little bit of extremism on the part of a sweet saint of God, but it was infinitely nearer the truth than the blind brutality of men who brush the dumb creation out of their way as though it had no relationship to God at all.

March on with the risen Christ! While you do not lose touch with the past, at least see to it that the past does not shackle you, and remember that you only secure a position of abiding when you recognise that He is going further.

I wanted on this last night that I should speak to

you for a time to have made another appeal on behalf of the famine stricken people of Russia. I know how your minds have been clouded by certain political happenings and developments generally in Genoa. I know that we are apt to forget the sombre human tragedy of hunger and of death amidst the tangle and the shiftings of our diplomacies, but I tell you diplomacy is a gossamer web in the face of great human tragedies like that. You should brush them aside, get down to the solid bed-rock of humanity and know in your hearts that no sophistry and no political entanglements have a right to come between your consciousness and the grim fact that multitudes are starving.

Do you know, I think we were never so splendid as in war, and we have never been so mean as in peace. I will tell you why it was. When victory came to us we said, "Abide with us," we sought to constrain it, put ramparts around it and hold it as it were lest it should elude our grasp. We did not know that Christ was going further and that the only way to victory was the way forward to brotherhood. We said to victory, "Abide with us," and we lost it. We lost it, so far at least, because we were not courageous enough or faithful enough.

For my part, when I read the other day that at Genoa, Germany and Russia which comprise between them some two hundred millions of the inhabitants of this Continent, by far the greatest number of them, by far the hungriest of them; had agreed that they would wipe out the past as it stood between them and set in motion again the wheels of industry so that the hungry might be fed, and the naked clothed, I said in my

heart, "God speed them." I do not like everything about the method, I perceive the cynicism, the subtlety, the brutality perhaps of the way in which it was done, but I also perceive that the saving of the dying, the feeding of the hungry, the clothing of the naked are rational things to do. If we have failed to do it all these three or four years, thank God at least they are beginning to do it. What in fact did we do? We said to Germany, Stay outside! We said to Russia, We do not approve of your methods, starve! but stay outside. Let victory abide with us. And our victory has corroded and we are stagnant people.

I read in the paper this week the worst thing I have read yet concerning Britain. This is how it reads:—

" 'Scores of babies are being offered every week to the National Children Adoption Society, 19 Sloane Street, S. W., by mothers whose only reason is that they find it impossible either to get work or accommodation as long as they keep their children. The thousands of mothers who apply to us to take their children are of an excellent type. Nothing but inability to support their children would induce them to part with them.' Miss Clara Andrew, founder and director of the Association, told a Daily Mail reporter yesterday, 'I get them here every day pleading to give away their children, whom they really love and wish to keep. There was a case the other day of a young couple living in a single room to whom a baby came to add to their already hard plight. The husband, an ex-service man, and the wife, were both strong and healthy, but neither could get any work. Another young couple said they could get an excellent joint post in the country if some one would take their child. Many mothers have asked us to take the youngest of

several children, that they could "board out" the others and be free to go to work and keep the home together.' Miss Andrew added that it was impossible to cope with the numbers offered."

This in Christian England,—and it is because in the main I venture to say, we said to victory, crass material victory, a victory of superior armaments, and superior numbers, "Abide with us." The World-Redeemer would have gone on further, but we were afraid of the dark and sought the old familiar place of refuge. We have come to the stage apparently, when in Christian England its own fathers and mothers give away their children because there are no homes for children in England and there is no work for people who must have children with them.

I say that is the saddest thing I have read yet concerning this dear island home of ours. That is the hand-writing on the wall, that is the knocking of the hand of God against our solid respectability and our stubborn self-righteousness. That is the call of God, who despises your spurious triumphs and calls to you for the human note that is made manifest in the Man Christ Jesus whose name we have taken these two thousand years, but whom we dare not follow.

O Mammon! What hast thou done, thou slayer of men, thou slayer of little children? O Mammon, thou that comest in all the panoply of might! Could a man but go out against thee as David went with a sling and a stone! I sling the stone at thee, thou cruel monster!

I appeal for the flowing of the tides of human sympathy and brotherhood, mercy and truth, and those

things that are akin to the Man Christ Jesus. He bore the tragedy of this old world on his heart and died that He might conquer. Some day I say again, we shall discover that constructive courage is one of the supreme Christian virtues. Some day we shall storm the hearts of virile men and women with a Gospel that is all athrob with a redeeming love for humanity.

He is going further. If we do not go with Him, He may pass over from us to some other race. The publicans and the harlots He said in His own day, crowded into the Kingdom of God before the righteous. They resented it as we may resent other nations against whom we harbour bitter feelings crowding along the way of commonsense while we hang back. He is no respecter of persons! If we will not clothe the naked, feed the hungry, save the dying, He is going further!

I beseech you young men and women! I am not speaking morbidly to-night. I have a kind of subconscious feeling that I am speaking my last message to you for some time, but I feel I am coming back in a few short weeks,—it is not that I am depressed, but I believe with John Wesley that a man should always preach as if he were preaching for the last time. Get down to the things that really matter, I beseech you. Young men and women, hold fast by the historic Jesus, the Man who lived in Galilee, the despised, the rejected One, but the Man in whom all the great things root and from whom all the sweet flowers spring. Hold fast by the historic Jesus and when you have laid hold of Him turn and face the future in the courage of His presence with the impulse of His Spirit and go on with Him! go on with Him! to somehow make your life

and influence tell for the humanising of the world, for the equalising of the scales of justice for the bringing of men nearer to God, and if it sometimes seems as if the sun is setting, do not doubt the final triumph of the Christ.

"Say not the struggle nought availeth,
The labour and the wounds are vain,
The enemy faints not, nor faileth,
And as things have been they remain.

"If hopes were dupes, fears may be liars;
It may be in yon smoke concealed,
Your comrades chase e'en now the fliers
And, but for you, possess the field.

"For while the tired waves, vainly breaking,
Seem here no painful inch to gain
Far back, through creeks and inlets making,
Comes silent, flooding in, the main:

"And not by eastern windows only,
When daylight comes, comes in the light;
In front the sun climbs slow, how slowly!
But westward, look, the land is bright!"

He is going further, let us march with Him.

IX

GOING BEYOND JESUS

TEXT: *John 2:8-9.* Look to yourselves, that ye lose not the things which we have wrought, but that ye receive a full reward. Whosoever goeth onward and abideth not in the teaching of Christ, hath not God; he that abideth in the teaching, the same hath both the Father and the Son.

HERE is a little letter which looks as if it might have been written hastily in some spare and sunny afternoon hour. It consists only of thirteen verses as it stands in our copy of the Scriptures. It is by no means an exhaustive letter. It was apparently written by a man who thought it scarcely necessary to write at all, because he expected very shortly to stand face to face with the person to whom he was writing. But he had a feeling that he might be delayed, or else it was a long while since he had last written, and it might be well if he sent just these few lines in case his visit should be deferred longer than he anticipated.

"Having many things to write unto you, I would not write them with paper and ink, but I hope to come unto you and speak face to face, that your joy may be fulfilled."

Nothing could well be more casual, less formal, than this brief message which believers for twenty cen-

turies have counted as part of the inspired word of God.

But the very fact that this fragmentary note became bound up in the canon of the Scripture has invested it with tremendous importance. The Bible has meant more to the human race than any other book—it has been translated into almost every tongue. Men have sought for ancient manuscripts with more eagerness than a diamond-seeker seeks for diamonds or a merchant for goodly pearls. Enough books have been written upon these thirteen verses to form a library by themselves. The student of the Bible, for the mere sake of satisfying himself that he has mastered the literature of his subject, is compelled to spend many hours in attempting to decide questions of authorship, or of date, or of destination, to say nothing of delicate, critical questions concerning the precise meaning of words. There is of course a charm about this kind of study and no one really begrudges it. At the same time one often has a feeling that such a man as he who wrote this brief message might have been very surprised had he been informed concerning the keen criticism, the endless questions and the mountains of literature which were to be built upon it. Who, for instance, was the "elect lady" and her children to whom the author wrote, or indeed was she a lady at all, or is the expression, as some have suggested, merely a poetic title for a communion of saints in the early time? Was the writer really John, he of the Twelve, or was he the Presbyter John or some other? Is he the same as he who wrote the fourth Gospel; and are the first and the third of the three

Epistles also to be traced to his hand? Here are nice critical questions which might keep the student busy for several years. It is all an illustration of what usually happens when the minds of men are concentrated for long periods even upon the simplest fact. Questions will be started, doubts will be suggested, explanations will be advanced, which, in their turn, require further explanations. One begins to wonder sometimes whether anything would remain stable if subjected to the constant play of thoughts and words. Where there are many tongues, there is sure to be at least some confusion of tongues. Perhaps the truth is that it is the things we talk least about that abide.

Really it does seem as if this brief letter was originally written to one of those good and gracious women who have always been found in the heart of every communion of believing folk. Some Countess of Huntingdon, as it were, in the ancient time, unknown by name, preserved only to memory by the fact that this letter was written to her by so important a person as John. One who reigned in her own home like a queen and whose children followed in her pious steps. One whose hospitable door was ever open to the Christian folk of her day, whether the local people, who worshipped at the same meeting, or the travelling folk, who constantly shared her hospitality on their way from one town to another.

And it does seem also as if this letter was penned by that same John, who in the days of his youth had kept company with the Christ, and whose affectionate nature and trustworthy character had both sought and

been granted the privilege of leaning his head upon Jesus' breast as they supped.

And now he is an old man, full of grace and tenderness, yet with unshaken convictions, which he holds with more conscious tenacity and, maybe, with that slight tinge of fear which comes so naturally to the old, who feel that life is slipping away from them and that new forces are in operation in the world.

Quite evidently it is an old man who is writing this letter. It is not merely that he calls himself "the elder," which might either be an official title in the Church, or might simply mean that he had reached that period in life when old people like to remind others of the many winters which have added their snow to their heads. Every touch reveals this quality of venerableness. He is interested in the children of this elect lady; he has watched them grow, no doubt, even from infancy; he still calls them children, though, maybe, they have reached mature years. He speaks in terms of simple affection, which are characteristic of the friendship which has been long tried and has passed through its summer into its rich autumn. He is naïvely sure that, when he pays his long intended visit, this old and tried friend will receive him with joy.

There is yet a more sure indication of age in the revelation of his fear concerning the advanced thought of certain people who are troubling the minds of the believers of his generation. "Many deceivers," says he, "are gone forth into the world." "Look to yourselves."

What is it that one would expect the aged John to be most sensitive about? What truth would he be

likely to hold as most precious? What opponent would be likely to call forth such sharp words as these from so gentle a spirit,—“This is the deceiver and the anti-christ”? Why, naturally, if we know anything about human nature at all, what would stir him most deeply or rouse him most intensely would be any attack, open or secret, upon the grandeur of Jesus Christ. Think what Christ meant to John—what He had meant in those three rich years of close fellowship, what He had meant in those long subsequent years of active ministry and rich success in the ingathering of souls; what He meant now, when the shadows of the evening were falling and the old apostle looked back in the track of the slanting rays of the sun at the sheaves that lay upon the harvest field. Whosoever by so much as a syllable would detract from the glory of that Christ would touch this aged man to the quick.

And we know from other sources that such attacks were being made; they always had been made, in fact. From the very beginning there had been the attacks of unbelievers, the calumnies of hostile Jews, the sarcasms of unconvinced Gentiles. But we know also that there were far more insidious attacks being delivered by Christ's professed friends. There was the Gnostic insinuation that Christ was not a real person, but a mere phantom through whom God revealed Himself. Fancy telling John that Jesus was a phantom! He, whose head had lain upon His breast, and in whose ears the voice of the Christ had been like the music of the spheres. No wonder that, even in this scrap of an epistle, written in his old age, some hint of

that thunder is heard which, in the days of his youth, had caused him to be known as "Boanerges," the Son of Thunder.

And, besides, his intuition was right. The following centuries, which were hidden from him, but are clear to us, have demonstrated that Christ is central to the Christian faith. It is built upon Him, like a temple upon a rock; it is united to Him, like the branches to the vine; it is vitalised by Him, as the Head among the members. If Jesus Christ had been overthrown or explained away, or merely relegated to the common Pantheon in the days of John, or later, we should not be here to-day, and that long triumphant tale of the victories of the Christ would never have been told.

It must be that such things will happen again and again. It is impossible that one should take such a commanding place in the vanguard of human experience, as has been assigned to Jesus Christ, without the fierce fires of criticism burning around Him and the most pointed, stabbing enquiries being made. It must be always as it has been in the past, as it shall be again and again in the future, that the mind of the aged and the mind of the young will come into conflict concerning the Christ. This is no sign of His decline, but a sign of His vitality. We need never dread questions concerning Him. If there be anything to dread it is the silence that hovers over indifference.

But we may well pause and reflect upon John's words in the midst of our crisis. We may take a look backward and also a look forward. "Look to your-

selves that ye lose not the things which we have wrought."

Just think for a moment what has been wrought in the name of the Divine Christ. Would you dare to say to what point the human race would by now have attained had it not been for Him? Our progress, it seems at times to us, has been slow enough. In days like our own we may be tempted to ask disparagingly whether there has been any progress at all, but have we no vision for the depths into which we might have been plunged without the magic of this Divine Name and the leverage of this Divine Personality? We have gone too far even to dream of undermining the foundations of the Christian faith. So beautiful has been this story, so marvellous its unfolding, so potent has it been to kindle the purest flames of nobility of character, so fragrant is it with the prayers of men, so intimately entwined with our poetry and art and science and philanthropy, so rich in faith and hope and love, that if, by any diabolical ingenuity of thought or fatal perversity of heart, the Christ could be dislodged from the pinnacle of His splendour and hurled down into the limbo of forgotten gods and ideals, how would this old world ever trust again?

"Look to yourselves," lest not by thought, but by want of thought, not by desire but by wrong desire, we lose the things that men such as John have wrought. Conjure up in your minds the vision of the men and women of faith who have wrought in His name. Hear again the message of history and not the least the history of this our own land; see for yourselves how its institutions and its laws, ay, and its very stones

are involved in Him, and at least look to yourselves lest we lose the things that they have wrought.

But must we not advance in thought? Can the world live on a faith which not only does not change, but must be stated in formulas which do not change?

"Advanced thought!" There is no terror in that word. We must either advance in thought or stagnate. The Christ challenges us to advance. Our thought is far behind the chaos to which our practice has brought us, but at least consider whether this "going onward," as John calls it, is worth while if it takes us out of our abiding in the teaching of the Christ. So often in the past the world has had to find its way back from its advanced thought to take refuge again in the teaching of the Christ. So often men and nations have found that, though they had what they called "advanced thought," they had not God.

This is not to call you back to stereotyped modes of expression; this is not to bind the throbbing pulses of to-day with the ceremonies of dead yesterdays. This is to ask you that, with all your hard and advanced thinking, you never forget that, except ye abide in that purity and truth and piety where Christ dwelt continually, ye have not God. This is to remind you that, though there have been many changes throughout the centuries, yet the unbroken testimony of those who abode in the teaching of Christ is that they have kept both the Father and the Son.

The world itself, like John, is growing old. We know not how many centuries lie yet within the womb of the future waiting still to be born, but, when we look back over the vista of the past, recalling its his-

tory, watching its long struggle upward for the things of the Kingdom of God, we are called upon, even if we are young and life is throbbing in our temples and surging in our veins, to remember the things that have been wrought, to hesitate lest we turn away from them, and rather to give ourselves to them with renewed consecration, that we may carry on nearer to its completion that great and wondrous city of the living God which Jesus Christ made vivid and real in the minds of men—the city whose builder and maker is God, the foundation of which is truly laid, but whose radiating streets and half-built towers yet wait the contribution of our hands and our hearts.

I would claim for the Christ, and those who have followed Him throughout the centuries, that, just at a time like this, when for failure to follow Him we are reeling upon the very edge of chaos, we, because of not “looking to ourselves,” or because of a so-called “advanced thought” of the kind which is mere vague theory divorced from deepest fact, should not, in our measure, suffer this long-tried and blood-bought humanity to “lose its full reward.”

X

HOW FAITH GROWS

TEXT: *John* 5:46. For if ye believed Moses, ye would believe Me; for he wrote of Me.

WE are very apt, when we read these sayings of the Master, to skim off quickly their surface meaning, turning away with unenquiring mind, satisfied that we have understood what He said, which is to say we have missed His meaning altogether. For His meaning seldom lay upon the surface, and never lay entirely there; the centuries have been plumbing the meaning of Christ's words and have not bottomed them yet. Thus, when we read a passage like this:—

“For if ye believed Moses, ye would believe Me; for he wrote of Me,”

we are apt to think that the key to its meaning lies in the last clause. We ask ourselves, “What did Moses write of Him?” and then there comes to our minds that classic passage, in Deuteronomy xviii:15, read this morning:—

“The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto Him shall ye hearken”;

and we say to ourselves, "Yes, He was blaming them because they did not remember this passage which Moses had written, and apply it to Himself." But would not that have been a very hard test to make? Was it not rather much to expect that they should remember one passage like that, which had lain in these ancient books all the centuries, and that they should have had the spiritual insight and mental acumen to apply it to Jesus, and to see beneath the apparent differences the fundamental unity that there was between Moses and Himself? I think that would have been a very hard test to make, and a very severe condemnation, if that had been all the Master had meant. But we must look deeper.

You notice, first of all, that He threw doubt upon the thing they were most sure of. "IF ye believed Moses!" Why, Moses was the centre of their thought, the centre of their life, the centre of their nation, the centre of their religion. If there was one thing they were sure of it was that they believed Moses. But Jesus said, "IF ye believed Moses"; for there are no beliefs we need to scrutinise more carefully than those we are so sure we hold that we never question them.

Sir Oliver Lodge has told us that there are fish which are unconscious of the water. They are the fish which live where the water is deepest, but it is so deep that no current ever disturbs them, no tempest ever startles them. They live where it is water always, and he suggests that they are unconscious of their element, just as we are unconscious of the air until it blows, grows hot or grows cold. So there are many things we are so sure we believe that we never

question them, and maybe these are the beliefs which influence our lives the least.

The Master was also suggesting to them that they looked back upon Moses, but did not look forward with him. Moses "wrote," He said. Men write because they want to perpetuate something they feel is slipping out of their grasp; they write for the future; it is their appeal to the ages. Moses wrote, but they had been looking back upon Moses instead of looking forward with him. They kept on looking back upon Moses until their backward look stopped their progress and their growth; they were fettered by Moses instead of being inspired by him.

Now Moses himself, like all men of faith, had the forward look. His very life was a symbol of unfinished things. He had dedicated himself to the bringing of these people into the Promised Land, but he only saw that land with his eyes, the sole of his foot never trod upon it. He left the people, to whom He had given his life, upon the wrong side of the river, and died upon the mountain-top—a pathetic symbol of things unfinished.

You cannot read the writings of Moses, especially those that are attributed to him in the Book of Deuteronomy, without feeling the pathos of this forward-looking man. He is trying to legislate for a land into which he is not entering, and into which he never will enter. He is trying to draw out of the treasure of the past those principles that will guide his people when his voice has become silent and he has lain down in the dust to die.

All men of faith are men of the forward look.

Recall to your mind that great classic chapter, the 11th of Hebrews, and think of those great souls who pass as it were across the stage before us. They are men who have not attained, only they have seen. They pass before us with a far-away look that is not of the past, but of the future. The tragedy of Faith is that we so often lock it up in the past. We speak of the Faith that was once committed to the saints, and then we gather round it as if we would keep it intact and forbid any impious hand to rest even for a moment upon it. We forget that faith is only *rooted* in the past; it is a living thing which grows on into the future. A faith that is only backward-looking is a faith that is cramped and perishing.

They had been looking back upon Moses for centuries, and all the time Moses had written and appealed to the future. They had no vision for the future, but only for the past. Faith, as I have said, is an organic thing. You look at an acorn; you know there is the potency for an oak tree about that acorn. The oak tree is not in the acorn, but the power is in the acorn to gather the oak tree. By and by it will stretch out its hands into the air, and up towards the sky, and take in with its invisible fingers the oak tree that is there about it. It will gather it within and weave it together with its mystic chemistry, but it is not the oak tree itself which is in the acorn, but only the power to gather it in out of air and soil.

If they had believed Moses, they would have believed all those other prophets who had come in the spirit of Moses. But Jesus had to say to them more than once, and once he said it with tears:—

"Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted?"

"Ye build the sepulchres of the prophets, and garnish the tombs of the righteous, and say, 'If we had been in the days of our fathers, we should not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets, wherefore ye bear witness against yourselves.'"

All the great prophets, who had come to them in the spirit of Moses, they had rejected. With their backward look toward Moses, they cast out Elijah, they slew Isaiah, they imprisoned Jeremiah. They had made the prophets, who had come in the spirit of Moses, to live in dens and caves of the earth, and now had they not slain John the Baptist, last of the line to come in the spirit of Moses, and were they not rejecting Him who said, "*I came not to destroy, but to fulfil*"?

A living faith must have affinity with all that is cognate and related to it. A living faith should never be shut up; it should go out into life like the seed goes, to gather into itself all that is native to it.

Now we stand, roughly speaking, about as far away from Christ as Christ Himself stood from Moses. We have passed out of the Jewish dispensation into the Christian dispensation, but we are still just as human as they were, and we have been perpetuating very largely the same mistakes. We have been thinking that we believed certain things, and it is those beliefs above all things that need to be challenged and are being challenged. We have been talking about the Christian faith as they talked about the faith of Moses, as though it were a thing that was

planted away in the past to be preserved intact and to be made credible to men, that thus they might look back over the mists of the centuries and feel sure that God came into human life in the person of Christ Jesus. We have looked too much to the past and not enough to the future. It is a great thing to believe that Jesus lay in the cradle at Bethlehem, but that is only to believe that the acorn lies in the soil. The great thing to believe is that the oak tree will come, and that out of the cradle at Bethlehem will come the great things of the ages. Our faith is not vital unless it is looking rather to the future, though sure enough of its past; not divorced from its past, but challenging and appropriating the days that are to come.

Over and over again we have seen that, though our fathers have professed to believe in Jesus, they have not believed in those who came in the spirit of Jesus.

If our fathers had believed in Jesus, they would have believed in Savonarola. There were faults about Savonarola. There were limitations of knowledge, there was a mixture of religion with politics which was not good, there was a clinging element of superstition—he had not disentangled himself from all the magic and supernaturalism of the middle ages, but he was a man of Christ, he came to plead for the Kingdom of Christ, he came to call men back to Christ, and our fathers, who thought they believed in Christ, hanged and burned Savonarola. We know quite well they were wrong. They should have welcomed him. If they saw certain defects in him, certain mistakes he made, they should have tried to set the mistakes right,

not kill the man whom the anomalies had made desperate.

If our fathers had believed in Jesus, they would have believed in Martin Luther. He was not infallible; how could he be, trained as he had been in the seclusion of a monastery, guileless, unpractical son of man, flung out suddenly where great things were afoot, made in spite of himself the centre of a new order, the changing form of which he had not truly envisaged? But if the Pope of that day had believed in Jesus, he would not have sent his Bull to excommunicate Luther; he might have sent a Bull to excommunicate John Tetzel, and to stop the infamous practice which drove this sincere monk desperate.

If our fathers had believed in Jesus, they would have believed in John Wesley. He was trying to reach people whom the Church was not reaching. He was going out with the love of God in his heart, speaking in the open, at the mouths of coalpits, to men whose faces were marked with the tears that rolled down their begrimed cheeks, to tell them of the love of God. Our fathers, who were so sure they believed in Jesus, were afraid that John Wesley was upsetting things. What was going to happen if these new forces were let loose in the Church? Sure that they believed in Jesus, they stood with their backs to the sun and said at last, "Away with this man!" The ages know perfectly well that they were wrong. This man had brought a new vision; he came upon a fresh tide of the Grace of God.

If our fathers had believed in Jesus, they would have believed in William Booth, for he came in the

spirit of Jesus. It is true he came with drums and trumpets, and tambourines and other queer things which shocked people's conventions. It is true he brought drunkards into the Church, and harlots; it is true that the undiscerning mob stoned him in the streets. Our fathers, who were so sure they believed in Jesus, tried to silence this man, but the ages know they were wrong. It was their faith rather than his that was weak; it was their faith that was sterile, while his was vital; it was their faith that was buried in the soil of the past, it was his faith that was reaching out like the branches and leaves of the tree, to absorb what was present in the future.

I will come closer home. If *we* had believed in Jesus, we should have believed in Woodrow Wilson. "Ah! now," you say, "you are coming upon controversial ground. We will agree with you when you talk about our fathers who are dead. We will garnish the graves of the prophets." You are thinking possibly of the many things that have been said about Woodrow Wilson, of his personal limitations, of his autocratic spirit, of his inexperience among the diplomats of old Europe, of the impracticability of his fourteen points and the unreadiness of the world to receive them. Yes,—that is what they said about Savonarola; that is what they said about Luther and Wesley and Booth; that is what they always say. No prophet has ever been flawless and impeccable. What the ages want to know is whether he had the truth in him. I am no prophet, nor the son of a prophet, but I venture to suggest that fifty years from now they will look back to our time and say, "That man had

the truth; his fourteen points were perhaps ahead of his time, maybe it was too much to expect that they should have been accepted all at once, but those men who set themselves to put the blood-rusted key of the past into the portal of the future at Paris were wrong, and he was right."

If the Christian Church had believed in Jesus, it would not have been brow-beaten by accusations that Wilson's scheme was idealistic, impracticable, that he did not know the inwardness of politics, that these things could not be because they had not been before. If we Christians had really believed in Jesus, we would have said, "This is right and this way will we go and not that, and if our generation passes before the goal is reached, this way will we still go and our children will follow after us." It was our faith that was defective; it was that we did not sufficiently believe in Jesus, for I hold that belief in Jesus is the most assimilating thing in the world. I have no longer any patience with that kind of faith in Jesus that is divorced from the actual world in which we are living. To me it seems that the tragedy of the Church is that so often she has had her back to the light; that to every new challenge that has come to her she has said, "No, no, that will disturb the established order"; she has turned her back to the sun; she has wanted to conserve what was in the past. You do not conserve the acorn; you plant it and let it grow!

As I understand the truth that is in Jesus, there is no real truth anywhere that cannot be assimilated to it. It is the most daring thing in this world. It is a religion of heroes; if we have made it a religion of

monks, so much the worse for us all. The Christian religion is a religion for brave men and women,—its roots are there in the past as a pledge of its appeal in the future, and every good thing that is worth believing finds Jesus Christ at the end of the road.

May I ask you what you do believe? Let us get down to solid fact. You say, "I believe in manliness." Yes, if you do believe in manliness, you will believe in Jesus. You say, "I believe in Truth, that a man should speak the truth though the heavens fall." If you do believe in truth, by what right can you refuse to believe in Jesus? "I believe in purity," you say,—Well, if you believe in purity, you will believe in Jesus. "Ah, but," you say, "I have mental difficulties concerning Jesus." That is not surprising; He would be a strange Christ to challenge the ages who did not provoke mental difficulties; He would be a strange god-like being if it were easy to understand Him. It is not that, nay, if you were to go so far as to say, "I have doubts as to the historicity of Jesus," I would not let you go. I would say, "But somehow He is *there*; if not in the flesh, He is yet there; He is there in ideal; He is there in the minds of men, in the response of the human soul. By what right will you reject Him?" All true roads lead to Jesus. All true faith is an assimilating thing; it builds upon itself, it gathers to itself, and the only valid faith is the faith that is always growing.

To me He is not only historical, He is Divine. To me He sounds the key-note of life, He makes the universe throb with melody, He slays every base and ignoble thing; He is the promise of the dawn, He is the assurance of the glory of God.

"So, through the clouds of Calvary—there shines
His face, and I believe that evil dies,
And good lives on, loves on, and conquers all—
All War must end in Peace. These clouds are lies.
They cannot last. The blue sky is the Truth.
For God is Love. Such is my Faith, I have
My reasons for it, and I find them strong
Enough. And you? You want to argue? Well,
I can't. It is a choice. I choose the Christ."

XI

GOD IS LIGHT

TEXT: *John* (first epistle general) 1:7. God is Light . . . if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanseth us from all sin.

THAT is a very old-fashioned text. I suppose there are many thousands of ministers standing up in London at this moment just about to announce their text. I wonder how many of them have announced a text of that kind. There is a clause in it which is supposed to be unacceptable to-day. It seems to bring with it associations which are no longer palatable, which are said to have no force. For my part I believe that there is nothing more vitally necessary to religion just now than the re-reading of those old and sacred and drastic passages which are found in the Bible. The religion that is purged of those is an emasculated thing and could never win the world.

I do not know how to preach this text except in a somewhat auto-biographical way, I have tried to find another way and cannot, so I hope you will pardon the seeming impertinence of such a method.

I was brought up in a very rigid, old-fashioned theological school. I was growing up as a boy in the days when the evangelical movement had not spent its force, when Spurgeon, Parker and Liddon were the

outstanding preachers in London, when Moody and Sankey were revered as God's honoured servants and when in our Churches we sang Sankey's hymns with their frequent allusions to the blood of Jesus. There was one hymn which may be said to have been typical:—

“Jesus paid it all,
All to Him I owe,
Sin had left a crimson stain
He washed it white as snow.”

In my later teens there came a spiritual impulse which transformed my life. I believe when that influence comes, it most often comes in our teens, in the days of youth's high heroism when we are prone to strike the noblest key of our life. It was in those days that a great spiritual impulse came to me. I accepted the forms of thought which were prevalent in my home and my surroundings. They appealed to me and helped me for a time. They enabled me to interpret the spiritual impulse which had come to me; they made my heart throb with the sense of a great divine love and of a great and sacred purpose in life. But I think it was not very long before it became dimly apparent to me that I had been born in a changing age, when one wave of thought had almost spent itself and another was sweeping over the world. I found there were many departments of my life that my religion had not touched very deeply. It had not taken out of my heart and mind my prejudices. It was many a long year before I grew tolerant towards a Roman Catholic. It was many a long year before I could be anything else but a Britisher. I

was as ardent in my belief in the British race as any Jew could have been in his faith concerning the peculiar people. There was a considerable period when I believed that the British race represented the lost ten tribes and the great promises of the old Book were fulfilled among us as a people. I went into business and wanted to become rich. I was not conscious of anything in my religion that prevented my doing so. I believed in being industrious, earnest and mastering the duties of one's craft or calling. I was a strong Protectionist. I held as my fiscal belief that if some foreign country wanted to sell you some article for sixpence which your own country could not produce for less than half-a-crown it was your bounden duty to insist upon paying half-a-crown so that your native industries might not be crippled.

When I became a preacher of the Gospel I became more and more conscious of the difficulty of interpreting the faith as I had been brought up to understand it, in terms that other people, particularly young people, could readily understand. I was feeling my way out through the long years to an interpretation of the faith which would not deny the experience that lay behind me and yet would be appropriate and applicable to the conditions I found around me.

Then came the war. I know I speak often about the war; it seems to me I can scarcely get through a sermon without some allusion to it either directly or indirectly. I do not want to speak about it, but the war transformed life for me. It was the greatest thing that ever happened. It got to my soul as even the teaching of the faith had not reached it in previous years.

I came away to live amongst the men. It was my great privilege to be neither a combatant nor an official, just a nondescript man, clad in khaki, responsible to nobody in particular, living amongst the men in a close informal way. I talked to them in their thousands, I talked to thousands of them as units. I slept where they slept, I went where they went. I wore no distinguishing badge of any kind, no cross-belt, no stars, but just lived amongst the men without name, without title, without fame. It was often my place to speak to men as they were going into battle. I looked into a great sea of faces knowing very well that some of them I should not see again. It was often my place to count up those who were missing and to send home, on their behalf, messages to their friends.

I came out of that thing as we all came out at last, a changed man. Life had taken on a new aspect, values had been altered. The truth that had come home to me with pungent power as truth often does in the most unlikely places and in the most unlikely way was this:—"God is light. This darkness, this turmoil, this hate and wretchedness is not God. God is light. If we walk in the light as He is in the light we shall have fellowship one with another. These hates and superstitions and prejudices and competitions are the negations of His light. If we walk in the light we have fellowship one with the other"; and there came to me a sense of a great consecration. It seemed as if blood had cleansed me from sin, from some kinds of sin at any rate. The blood of Tommy Atkins, the blood of the "unknown warriors" had cleansed me from some kinds of sin. I could no longer

surrender myself to narrow nationalism, I had passed out of the ranks of the merely British folk, I had mingled in the multitude of humanity. It was not that I had lost (for nobody ever loses) the sense of the great association with the land that gave one birth whose history and traditions have touched you at every point. Nobody ever loses that, but I had passed out somehow into a wider association of men and I knew as I had never known before that men are fundamentally alike, modified by history, modified by climate, modified by traditions, modified by religion, but man is man wherever you find him, whether he be Briton or Frank or German, white or black, brown or yellow, man is man and every one of us in our greatest human associations are just fellow-men.

I learned that amidst the darkness. I learned it because I felt and knew that God was light. I learned it because blood touched me and cleansed away my prejudices.

I learned also to look at fiscal things in a new way. I learned to see as I had never seen before that the object of all the great intricate tangle of commerce and industry is the well-being of mankind, that if we walk in the light those interests will draw us closer together, will not divide us into hostile camps and make enemies of us. I could not help seeing as you could not help seeing that down at the base of the great war were economic questions, questions that touched us all, that helped to precipitate the great catastrophe at last. The blood that touched me cleansed my mind, clarified my outlook, gave me a new attitude to all those ramify-

ing conditions that make up our complex commercial and industrial life.

I learned too, touched by blood, to see a new sacredness in the home and the cradle and the love that exists between man and man, man and woman, man and child. I do not know why I learned it there as I had never learned it before, for the war was the direct negation of all these things, but it was blood that touched me and cleansed me from sin, from that kind of sin at any rate.

Now I have ventured to say these personal things only because I know very well that there is nothing peculiarly personal in the story. It has been your experience also, if not in every detail at least in its broad outlines and its deep underlying feeling. It seems to me that in the light of that experience through which we have all passed more or less, we may well come back to this ancient Book and see it anew.

You know this Epistle was written by John. There is no need to argue that. If you are a student of the book you will most likely admit it, if you are not a student you will accept the statement. This was the man who in the days of our Lord's life leaned his head on Jesus's breast. When Jesus went anywhere very particularly He always took John with Him. When He climbed the slopes of Olivet or was glorified upon the Mount of Transfiguration, or prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane He liked to have John near Him. In the anguish of the Cross His great eyes roamed over the faces of the people until they rested upon the face of John, and next to John, not consciously I suppose, but inevitably, there was standing

His Mother. Jesus said to John: "Behold thy Mother." It was that kind of fellowship which John had with Jesus.

When he tried to explain Jesus to the people he necessarily took the thought-forms of his time and cast his teaching into them. The thought-forms with which he was most familiar were those that centred in the Temple and the ritual of the Jews. Naturally, as all the apostles did in the beginning, John poured the new truth into the old conduits.

But John lived a long while. He outlived the rest of the Twelve. He lived right on into the second century and then he found new movements afoot. When the Gospel had gone outside the Jewish circle and had come in contact with the great throbbing world there were new interpretations of things which began to be expressed and particularly as every student of history knows there was that which we have learnt to call Gnosticism. It was an attempt to amalgamate the emotionalism of the East with the culture of Greece and Rome. In John's time there was a special form of it which we call Docetism. Men thought that the infinite God would never touch matter which was necessarily impure. The flesh was an unworthy thing to them. Spirit and flesh were widely separated. They thought that a man might live in the spirit and it mattered little what he did in the flesh. Some of them taught that a man might sin as much as he liked in the flesh so long as his spirit was pure. They taught that the Father God had never been identified with Jesus; there might have been an appearance of His dwelling with him but it was not real. Some of them taught

that the Spirit of God rested upon Jesus at the time of His baptism but left Him again before the agony of His Cross. These were men who taught that the only thing that was necessary was to *know*, it was by no means so necessary to *do*.

John wrote this Epistle as a protest against that kind of teaching and the first thing he laid emphasis upon was that Jesus was real. Who should know that if not John? . . .

"That which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon and our hands have handled, of the Word of Life; for the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and shew unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father."

John had the instinct for the 'historical. He knew that without a historical foundation nothing ever really becomes powerful in this world. Truth never becomes real until it touches the earth, truth never becomes dynamic until it is embodied. That is always so. Study philosophy and see how it always marches with history. There is little philosophy except where it touches history and roots itself in a fact. Columbus was not the first man who believed the world was round, and even when Columbus had been half way round it people were not convinced. It was only when Magellan had sailed right round the world that the truth that the earth was globular rather than flat took hold of men and moved them.

Christianity would never have got a start if it had not rooted itself in a historical personality. My pres-

ent day Gnostics, many of those speculations and aspirations to which you give expression, would never have assumed reality had it not been for the historical life of Jesus.

John was instinctively right and the Church has felt all down the centuries, that the historical Jesus is the basis of faith. John called Jesus God's Son. Why not? Will you tell me? I told that every man is God's son; the poor drunkard reeling down the street and the harlot in the gutter, they are God's sons, God's daughters. Sometimes at least you have seen the divine likeness flame out and become manifest. It is important for you to believe that your fellow-men and women are God's sons and God's daughters—it is because we forget that that so many horrible things take place in this old world. And, if they are God's sons, why not Jesus of Nazareth? Why the centuries bear witness that in His face and in His life God Himself flames out as in no other face and in no other life. If any man was God's Son, John was absolutely right when he said that Christ was God's Son. For me, I have reached the stage when I do not care to put any boundaries to the person of Jesus. I can't take the Pauline Epistles with their great and wonderful Christology—I can take them for myself, but if you cannot go so far, at least you may use the words that John used and speak of Jesus of Nazareth as God's Son. John held fast by the Crucifixion because it was the touch of reality, it demonstrated the reality of the love of God to Him, it lit it up with flame, it took it out of the realm of mere theory and speculation and rooted it in reality. He had seen it and touched

it. He had seen the blood shed that cleansed from sin. If for me and for you the blood of the brave, those who died in the great war, has transformed our sense of moral values and has altered our outlook on life, you can readily understand surely, how such a life as that of Jesus of Nazareth touched men as nothing else had touched them, transformed their thinking, caused them to re-value their values, made the old world pass away, made a new world loom into view.

I do not think this generation ought to be far away from the Cross of Calvary. A generation that has a cross in its heart should surely be near The Cross. The generation which carries in the secret chambers of its being the vision of a little wooden cross, a generation which is all palpitating with fathers who have given their only begotten sons for the saving of the world should surely not be far away from the central mystery of the Christian faith which teaches that even as you were capable of great sacrificial giving for the saving of civilisation from destruction, so the Great Father Himself has given of Himself for the winning of the world. Was not the Incarnation a great act of splendid heroism on the part of God Himself?

That giving of the Christ is the world's supreme challenge, its dynamic centre, its symbol of sacrifice, of hope and of final victory. If He has not come into His Kingdom yet I will tell you why, for the same reason that we have not come into ours, because men do not walk in the light. There are men who in spite of the awful sacrifice of these last years are still in darkness, still cherishing the old hates, suspicions,

bigotries and fears which caused that Golgotha. They are still doing their business in the same old arbitrary inhuman way, they have not seen the light, they are not walking in it. If you have had a feeling sometimes as though you doubted whether the sacrifice had not been in vain, you have only the feeling that lies at the heart of the Christian faith. God Himself has suffered like you; God Himself is seeing His new order checked and hindered by the selfishness of men; God Himself has to wait through the centuries, God Himself has to toil on and believe on for the final victory of love over hate and of light over darkness. This Christian faith of ours was never nearer to the hearts of men than it is to-day. We interpret its great doctrines in differing ways according to our time and the thought-forms of our time, but surely we are beginning to see that the ultimate truth is in psychological terms rather than in logical terms. When I look back over the past, and study the writings of the great souls of bygone days, I may not be able to accept the formal statements of some of their dogmas, but my heart beats with theirs when I discover that psychologically our experience is identical. If one generation with little power of critical analysis accepted the idea of a world that was sold into the power of Satan and had to be redeemed at the cost of Christ's blood, I recognise that they formed an explanation which really did explain the Cross to them. If it were the only explanation which I could get I should have to reject it. But the central Fact itself is distinct from these and other partial explanations.

When all the apologetics of the Christian Faith

have been done with, I think the last bit of common ground may well be found in the hymns of the Church. Aristotle said long ago that poetry was more philosophical than history, and had a higher intensity. There are those great hymns of the Church, some of them ages old, written by men of differing communions, differing interpretations of identical experiences. You and I may differ in our interpretations very considerably but perhaps we may meet on the ground of inspired song. Listen to this :—

“When I survey the wondrous Cross
On which the Prince of glory died
My richest gain I count but loss
And pour contempt on all my pride.

“Forbid it Lord that I should boast
Save in the Death of Christ my Lord;
All the vain things which charm me most
I sacrifice them to His Blood.

“See, from His head, His hands, His feet
Sorrow and Love flow mingled down;
Did e’er such love and sorrow meet
Or thorns compose so rich a crown?

“Were the whole realm of nature mine
That were an offering far too small;
Love so amazing, so divine
Demands my soul, my life, my all!”

Oh, the words are too great to use, and the conscience retreats into the dark before the splendour of them, but the lives that have been most dynamic and the Christians who have been most triumphant have al-

ways been those in whose hearts the Cross of Christ has cut the deepest lines. The most dynamic thing, the most uplifting thing, the most glorious thing in the world is that infinite sacrifice which we celebrate in our hearts this holy season.

XII

THINGS THAT WORK TOGETHER

TEXT: *Romans 8:28*. We know that all things work together for good to them that love God.

I LOVE these sunlit mountain-peaks of the Bible. There are some passages of Scripture which almost everybody knows even in these days, when perhaps the habit of Bible study is not so prevalent as it used to be, and this is one of them. No one with discerning mind can help feeling, as we contemplate it, that millions of other souls beside ourselves have dwelt upon its message. Here is a passage that has been of unspeakable comfort to innumerable people in their hours of temptation and of difficulty, but it is only fair to say that it has been of unutterable difficulty to many other souls in their time of crisis. It is a passage that has stimulated the greatest faith; it is a passage that has suggested the most cutting doubt. No one can understand a saying like this by mere logical processes. If ever a soul is able to rise to the height of its faith, it is doubtless in rare moments, and two things are always necessary—the one is experience and the other is insight.

Observation seems to contradict it. No one dare say that there is a specially smooth path prepared for the feet of those who love God. No one dare say that the pitiless blast is mitigated or that the fierce heat of

life's fire is tempered because the soul loves God. Indeed the test of a true heart is not found in its prosperity, it is rather to the contrary. The truest heart, the heart that most loves God, is likely to enter the fiercest of the flame and endure the most pitiless blast of the tempest. Observation does seem to contradict the truth of this statement, and it is almost useless for the mind to seek to grasp a sure confidence concerning it by mere logical processes.

There is no greater mystery known amongst men than that of the relation between the human and the Divine will. All down the ages, in every creed under the sun, this has been the perpetual problem, the perpetual question. Everybody who knows the history of our Christian faith knows that this has been its central problem. There have been some minds which have found refuge in the thought of a great will of God which so completely comprehended all things that nothing could depart from it; a purpose of God which saw the end from the beginning, and was not only fixed as to its method, but fixed so completely that there could be no departure from it. There have been minds which have sought comfort in some such thought of God as that. I wonder that, amidst all their discussions, they have not more often dwelt upon the awful monotony of such a plan to God Himself. Who would not pity a God whose purposes were so arbitrarily fixed that there could be no departure from them? Whose ends were so clearly seen that there could never be one moment of hesitation in the Divine mind concerning the working out of those processes? —I say, who would not pity such a God as that?

One cannot feel, as one reads this great classic passage, the 8th of Romans, that Paul himself thought of God in that way. He thought of a God who had a purpose which even He could not arbitrarily fulfil. He spoke of a Spirit yearning for the accomplishment of His ends and apparently checked in His efforts. He says:—

“The Spirit helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit Himself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.”

It would seem that the Divine Being Himself had taken a step which was essentially a step of faith. It would seem that God Himself is justified by His faith even as we mortals are, that He would not be content so to exercise His will as to fix arbitrarily and without possible variation the purposes which He had laid down. It would seem that He brought into existence a creature called man who could not only love Him but could hate Him; who could not only do His will but could thwart His will; who could not only yield to His love but could despise His love. It would seem that God brought such a creature into existence, that far away in the past, as far as our eyes can penetrate the mist, He made it possible for such a creature to exist, slowly to develop, slowly to work out his own destiny, able to thwart Him at times. He saw the end from the beginning, He fixed limitations for man's own security, but he did not fix man's every thought and his every deed, for, so at least we may dare to speculate, He wanted a creature

who could come into free fellowship with Himself, who, amidst many mistakes and many lapses, could yet persist in his upward climb and could at last enter into a fellowship that was noble because it was free, and was individual because it had been wrought out amidst the fires of experience.

It is a great God whom we have to think of, a God of at least thirty millions of suns as even our poor eyes can see, and we know well that our eyes have not reached the uttermost borders of vision. He is a God whose purposes are not completed in this little planet or in this little sweep of man's mortal life. Ours is a great faith; a faith the implications of which grow upon men as the centuries pass; a faith which may become more perplexing to the mind at times, but which in our moments of intuition and inspired insight we see to be grander and nobler than our fathers dreamed. We are even yet like little children, wandering upon the edge of a great sea, seeking ever to penetrate the purposes of God. We may give the rein to our speculation at times, and we are foolish if we limit God by our own narrow thought. We are somewhat timid if we dare not believe, even amidst the perplexities of life, its apparent injustices, its awful cruelties, there may yet be a Divine purpose which maketh for good.

But I am not here just to speculate; I should have no right to be here unless, in some valid way, I might dare to say I *know* that all things work together for good to them that love God. Paul said that, but I ask you to notice that he said it in a moment when he was not calm, when he was in the midst of a great

spiritual afflatus, when his vision was keen, when his feeling was intense. It is just that makes this great chapter in Romans classic. It is an old, old chapter, but you cannot read it after all these hundreds of years without feeling the throb of a brave man's heart, the thrill of a dauntless spirit. Not even Paul could always write as he wrote in this 8th chapter. It was one of his great moments, when he saw into the heart of things. His exclamation of confidence is not mere dogmatism, it is the outcome of great insight, it is the outcome of a deep experience. We always feel, when we are reading what St. Paul wrote, that he was a man who had drunk very deeply of life's experience. Few men had so many vicissitudes of fortune as had Paul the Apostle. The doctrines which he enunciates are not the speculations of a quiet mind working as it were in the seclusion of some sheltered place. They are beliefs that have been wrought out in the furnace of life, that have been learned amidst experience.

There are few great writers in the world who are so self-revealing as St. Paul, and yet he never seems to want to talk about himself. You remember that great passage in the 2nd Corinthians, when he tells us, in a moment when he was stung by the false accusations of others, something of the story of his past:—

“Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; in journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in

the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness. Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the Churches."

The man who has passed through that is worthy to be listened to, and the truths that he had laid hold of are valid truths, wrought out amidst the fires of experience. Hear him again in his letter to the Philippians:—

"I have learned in whatsoever state I am therein to be content. I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: everywhere and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me."

This is a man then who had learned the truth through experience, experience aided by insight—insight that came to him in moments of inspiration, when he saw into the hidden meaning of things, and got his hill-top vision. Not always was it so with him. Sometimes the clouds must have come and blotted it out. But so deep was his impression that he held to it as the great central belief of his life, and his voice rings with confidence as he says:—"We *know* that all things work together for good to them that love God."

Now it seems to me that the heart of that saying lies in those two words, "work together." The most apparently contradictory things in life are not con-

trary so much as complementary. Light is not contrary to darkness, it is complementary; joy is not the contrary of sorrow, it is its complement; right is not only the contrary of wrong, it is its complement; you cannot have the one without the other.

I believe that Jesus Christ was the happiest Man who ever lived. Perhaps some heart says, "But was He not the Man of Sorrows?" Yes, because He was happy. No man knows what sorrow is who does not know what happiness is. No man is capable of sorrow who is not capable of happiness. Laughter and tears lie close together, you cannot separate them. That which makes a man without humour so dreadful a person is that he is a man without pity; a man who cannot laugh can do the most cruel things. A man who can laugh truly cannot go down into the depths of cruelty. Laughter and tears are compact of the same mystery, they work together. If it were possible, as we try in our futility to do, so to safeguard our lives that we should never know what sorrow is, we should wake up wondering what had happened to our joys. These things "work together." I had not known right unless I had known wrong; I had not loved the truth unless I had heard a lie—not only the blatant lie, but the half lie, the treacherous, subtle, plausible lie that sounds so like the truth, but is so much more destructive than the most blatant lie. I had never learned to love the truth unless I had heard that thing and felt something of its wrong.

It is no use my desiring courage if I am not prepared for the battle. There is no courage without conflict. I had not known love unless I had known hate.

You cannot have the one without the other—they “work together.” What Paul had discovered in his life was that all these contrary things that seem so baffling, so threatening, so thwarting, were the very things out of which after all he wrung his triumph and his joy. That “thorn in the flesh” of his was not a blessing taken by itself; how could it be? It checked him, spoiled his usefulness, shook his confidence, almost broke his heart; how could it be a blessing, only that he discovered that it “worked together” with the grace of God. Out of his own unutterable weakness came the discovery of the wonderful strength of God.

It is the human soul that decides values after all. I used to think in the war time (one does not like to refer to the war time nowadays, but life changed then for many of us—human nature was revealed stripped of all its adventitious values; you got down to realities at last). I used to notice that when the men waxed confidential, they always undid the flap of their tunic pocket, and presently produced their most precious things. Often a man would take out of his pocket some scrap of literature which he read in his spare moments. There were two things in this connection that the boys were exceedingly fond of, the one was the writings of Omar Khayyam, and the other was that little poem of Kipling’s called “If.” Scores of times in my experience, when men talked quietly and confidentially, they fell back upon either one of those two things. Those were the days when material forces were let loose which seemed to take no account

of the human soul, but came shattering down upon men and reduced them to a mere nothing. Some men there were who succumbed to it and seemed almost to exult in the sayings of that brilliant Persian mathematician, astronomer, free-thinker, Omar Khayaam, accepting with a savage kind of comfort the belief that a pitiless fate conquered what was great and beautiful and noble, and it was all one, whether you were good or bad, this same pitiless fate swept you away.

But there were other men who had got their feet upon a rock, and somehow, amidst the tempest, learned the value of the human soul. Many and many a time I heard them recite those lines of Kipling's; I know they are very hackneyed, but perhaps you will listen to them in this connection to-night:—

“If you can keep your head, when all about you
Are losing theirs and blaming it on you,
If you can trust yourself when all men doubt you,
But make allowance for their doubting too;
If you can wait and not be tired by waiting,
Or being lied about, don't deal in lies,
Or being hated, don't give way to hating.
And yet don't look too good, nor talk too wise;

“If you can dream—and not make dreams your
master;
If you can think—and not make thoughts your aim,
If you can meet with triumph and disaster
And beat those two imposters just the same;
If you can bear to hear the truth you've spoken
Twisted by knaves to make a trap for fools,
Or watch the things you gave your life to broken,
And stoop and build 'em up with worn-out tools;

“If you can talk with crowds and keep your virtue,
Or walk with Kings—nor lose the common touch,
If neither foe nor loving friend can hurt you,
If all men count with you, but none too much.
If you can fill the unforgiving minute
With sixty seconds’ worth of distance run,
Yours is the earth, and everything that’s in it,
And—which is more—you’ll be a man, my son!”

It is just the discovery that the soul is the great thing after all which transforms men. And if the soul be the great thing, how can you have its virtue without its vice, how can you have its victory without its battle? What merit is there when all other people are thinking as you are, and you are acclaimed as being wise because your voice accords with the voice of the multitude? That is not keeping your head, maybe that is losing it. You only know you have kept your head when, amidst the clamour of discordant voices, you hold fast by the truth as you know it.

This is the truth,—all things work together for good if you have a co-ordinating principle like the love of God. It is that co-ordinating principle which makes the unity of life. It is not the segregation of good and evil, not the division of experience, it is the complex experience reconciled by a great co-ordinating principle.

I love biography, but I cannot find great and good men except among those who were tested in the flame, except among those against whom the forces of life seemed to beat more and more as though they were determined to thwart and destroy and spoil. But the soul of a man, inspired by a great principle like the

love of God, discovers the mystery of how these apparently contrary things work together.

Ship-wreck: what good was ship-wreck to Paul? Beaten with scourges until his back bled: what good was that to Paul? But his soul took out of those experiences a more resolute courage, a truer compassion, a truer insight into the souls of men, a great discovery of the unutterable power of the Divine, and he says, in his moment of inspired insight, though the past looms behind him with all its checkered story, "We *know* that all things work together for good to them that love God."

What is it to love God? You say you cannot climb to that dizzy height, you have not faith, you have not knowledge; but there is another way in which you can love God—you can love your neighbour. It is of His mercy that He does not always expect us to scale the heights and solve those problems which at once baffle and yet allure men, which are at once the greatest difficulty and yet the greatest inspiration of religion. He does not expect us to solve all these, but points out an easier and a more accessible way. You would love God? There is your neighbour, what about him? Will you exploit him, will you jostle him out of the way, will you treat him roughly, will you neglect him, as though he had no concern for you? That is the negation of the love of God. But whosoever will love his neighbour will find his way to God opening up before him, nay, at long last it may be there is little or no distinction between love of God and love to man, and whosoever has that most wonderful, beautiful and co-ordinating thing in life, LOVE, will yet find light

and dark, sorrow and joy, right and wrong, life and death, heaven and hell, *all* things working together for good, while the soul will find its own way to triumph and to God.

XIII

THE PLACE OF VISION

TEXT: *Psalm 27:13*. I had fainted, unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living.

IF you will glance at your Bible, you will notice that the words, "I had fainted," are printed in italics, which, as you know, indicates that the translators, not finding a word in the original Hebrew which seemed to them to complete the sense, have added these words, "I had fainted."

And yet the sense is complete without them, the more especially if one were reciting this passage rather than reading it. Many commentators think that this Psalm we call the 27th is in reality two separate Psalms which have somehow become incorporated. Certainly from verses one to six it is an expression of sublime and happy confidence in God; while from the seventh verse onward it is in a minor key; the Psalmist is here revealed as in the midst of difficulties, eagerly supplicating the help of God. It may be that his mood has changed dramatically, or it may be that there are two separate Psalms bound together here, but from the seventh verse onward this man is in the midst of difficulties; he is even somewhat doubtful of the presence of God. Thus he says:—

"Hide not Thy face far from me; put not Thy servant away in anger: Thou hast been my help; cast me not off, neither forsake me, O God of my salvation.

"For my father and my mother have forsaken me."

(It is not the way a full-grown man usually speaks, but this is probably a proverbial expression which suggests that even those upon whom one might have counted with absolute confidence had forsaken him in his moment of peril.)

"Deliver me not over unto the will of mine adversaries: for false witnesses are risen up against me, and such as breathe out cruelty."

To be forsaken is bad enough, but to be hemmed around with people so closely that you seem to be stifled, and to know all the while that they are twisting the "truth you speak to make a trap for fools," are witnessing falsely against you; surely this was *enough to make a man faint!* Then he cries, "UNLESS I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living!" It is an exclamation, as though the Psalmist reels back from the contemplation of the terrible alternative.

Our translators have simplified the reading, but they have taken away something of the dramatic force in supplying the words which seem to them to be missing ("I had fainted"). Their instinct has been right I fancy, since they were contemplating a man of God. When life becomes too much for such a man, the tendency is to throw up the struggle, to sheath the sword, to faint.

But there are other men who might have required other words to describe their mood. In such a time the Epicurean might have said, "Let us eat, drink and be merry, for to-morrow we die." The sensualist might have said, "I fling the reins on the neck of my passions; who cares?" But the man of God would more likely say, "*I had fainted*, unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living."

It is that word, "*unless*," that is the dramatic word—a word that is full of mercy and the suggestion of Providence. It is the thought of that strange, unexpected counter-check and counter-balance which comes to one's help just in the hour of need, "UNLESS."

When we contemplate Nature, the thing that impresses us and helps us to believe that it is the expression of an All-creative Will is just the discovery of that Something in the heart of things which arrests decay or averts catastrophe. This planet on which we live, for instance, is as we know whirling around the sun in a great orbit comprising many millions of miles, as if it had been flung out from a central fire and went reeling on its way, so that there could be no end but catastrophe "unless" it were held up by that strange mystic power we only call (we do not explain) the Law of Gravitation.

We have come to Church to-day through the Autumn-tide, and some of you may have come, as I did, through the woods. You have seen the trees, which only the other day were rounded and soft in their leafy beauty, stripped of all their loveliness, so that now they rise up against the wintry sky with

stark and gaunt stems and branches. Were it not for experience you might say, "The beauty has gone, the earth is old and withered, the glory is departed!" But experience smiles into your face and says, "That would be so, *unless* there were a power which takes the green life out of the fragile leaves, that the wintry winds would blow away, and gathers it back into the stems and twigs, waiting for the renaissance of the Spring. It is the "unless" that makes you conscious of the mystery and power of Nature.

"All the rivers run into the sea, and yet the sea is not full," said the melancholy preacher hundreds of years ago, and that was to him a symbol of monotony. But sometimes, when we watch the rivers, how they gather the pollutions of the town, how sometimes they stagnate into pools, how when at last they roll into the sea they become impregnated with salt and never again could minister to our thirst nor fertilise the earth, *UNLESS* there had been that wonderful mystic power by which, as in invisible chariots, the old soiled fallen waters go up again into the blue sky to come down once more to re-fertilise the world. It is that "unless" that speaks of divine wisdom and power.

In our own lives, how weary we become! How the days crowd in upon us, the pressure of business, the clamour of the market, the dull routine of the daily task. Oh, we had fainted, unless there had been that mystery we call sleep, by which a man dies as it were, shuts his eyes upon life with all its questionings and problems, takes his short cruise into the realm of death and comes out of it again with new light in his face and new strength in his body. It is that

"unless" of sleep that makes life, not only tolerable, but fills us with a sense of wonder concerning the goodness of God.

When we look around Nature, there seems to be something automatic in this provision that has been made.

"Change and decay in all around I see," we sing sometimes in one of our great hymns; the grass withereth, the flower fadeth, the face and the fashion of it faileth, life issues in death, and all seems to be changing and decaying, only that there seems to be something which works with a kind of mechanical precision, so that the decay is arrested and the catastrophe is averted.

When we look within at the mystery of our own lives, this counter-checking, counter-balancing thing is not automatic; it is personal; it is embedded in the depths of our personality.

I had fainted, unless I had believed! There are two selves; there is the weak one and there is the strong one. There is the one that succumbs and there is the one that fights on; and we always find that our refreshment comes from an accession of personality.

Last week many of you listened to a brilliant and thought-provoking address from an eminent biologist about our individuality, and from his point of view he impressed us with our limitations. He made us feel that there are encircling walls beyond which we cannot get. Yes, that is so, but there is another "I" within us that does go further. There is an "I" that rises up, saying "I believe," and breaks through the encircling wall. I suggest that that "I" is as much

a part of our personality as the bones that make up our body or the skull that closes in our brain. It is not from the biologist's angle altogether that we understand ourselves. There are realities within our being which cannot be expressed in physical terms. Faith is as much a part of man as muscle. It is the promise of a greater life beyond; it is the principle that constantly challenges the mood that would faint or give up the struggle.

Fortunately for us, faith in some form or other is as truly a part of us as our physical organs. I like those anonymous words:—

“There is no unbelief:

Whoever plants a seed beneath the sod,
And waits to see it push away the clod,
He trusts in God.

“There is no unbelief:

Whoever sees, 'neath fields of winter snow,
The silent harvest of the future grow,
God's power must know.

“There is no unbelief:

Whoever says, when clouds are in the sky,
Be patient, heart, light breaketh by and by,
Trusts the Most High.

“There is no unbelief:

Whoever lies down on his couch to sleep,
Content to lock each sense in slumber deep,
Knows God will keep.

“There is no unbelief:

Whoever looks on when the eyelids close,

And dares to live when life has only woes,
God's comfort knows.

"There is no unbelief:
Whoever says, 'To-morrow, The Unknown,
The Future,' trusts that Power alone
He dares disown.

"There is no unbelief:
For thus, by day and night continually,
The heart lives by the faith the lips deny—
God knoweth why."

How often we had fainted, except we had believed. When you pray to God for some help in your time of crisis, do not be dismayed because there happens no miracle. God does not obtrude Himself upon us that way. God never draws attention to Himself; He is not self-centred; He is self-obliterating. He, the soul of our soul, the life of our life, the upholder of the universe, is the only Being who is not clamorous and self-centred, desiring the applause or gratitude of men. He is the Father of Jesus Christ, and the secret of His Divine Love is self-forgetfulness. He carries within the innermost recesses of His Being a Cross. The Cross was in the heart of God, and that is why it came to be on the hill called Calvary. When you supplicate the Great Eternal for help, in your hour of crisis, do not expect a miracle, do not expect to see Him or hear Him; but if there comes to you an accession of individuality, if that other "I" rises up within you and says to the weak complaining "I" that laments "I am fainting," "Nay, but I believe," be sure that God has answered your prayer.

All deliverance for us comes through an accession of individuality. God helps us to win out by making us strong.

And now, just for a moment, think of this last phrase: "I had fainted, unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord"—Where? "*In the land of the living.*"

It may be that is a characteristic Hebrew note, for the Hebrews, as you know, like most ancient people, had but a vague and fleeting vision of a life beyond the grave. They did believe—all men seem to believe, but to them the life beyond the grave was a pale shadow of the life that now is. Their views of God's Providence were short in their range. They wanted to see His goodness here and now in the land of the living.

Christianity, as you know, shifted the central point of existence to a realm out beyond the grave. We say it "brought life and immortality to light." It made men to think of themselves as not conditioned by the body, to think of life as not bounded by the grave. Maybe that Christian people have erred on their side. The ancient Hebrews thought of this life as red-blooded and that life as pale and shadowy, and it may be that Christians have sometimes spoken of that life as the full life and this life as but a pale shadow.

Is not the truth that all life is one? It is as perfectly conditioned for its tasks here in the body as it can ever be yonder when the body has ceased to be. It is the one life, just as the life of a child is a perfect life for a child. You would not wish to

give him the experience and thoughts of a man. He is full of life, but full of that kind of life which is native and natural to a child.

I hold that the life is one, and that here and now, as I have it, it belongs to the body, and I want to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living.

There are some kinds of goodness that one feels daring enough to say we shall never know if we do not know them here in the land of the living. Our fathers have been accustomed to speak of the life beyond as if it were a life in which there would be no temptation. Well, maybe. But is there no good in temptation? Is it not worth while? Are there no lessons to be learned in it, no victories to be achieved? Temptation is part of this life, and we should want to see the goodness of the Lord in the midst of it.

Our fathers have spoken of the life beyond as if the wicked would not be there. They have described variously where the wicked would be, but they have always described the life over the border as a life of uninterrupted and flawless fellowship with the saints. Well, maybe. But is there no good in contact with men who are not saints? Is it not good for us to be surrounded with all manner of men and women? Are there not some things to learn from the ill-mannered or the black-hearted? Are there not some tasks to be done under these conditions which must be done here and now in the land of the living?

Our fathers have spoken of the life beyond as if all our familiar fellowships would have undergone a great change. They have left us doubtful whether our

highest human relationships, those of husband and wife, father and child, would remain the same, and men have wistfully wondered whether these relationships even exist in the great life beyond. Well, who knows? But is there not something that makes them precious here; is it not worth while to have known true love between one heart and another? Is it not worth while to have looked into eyes that were almost on a level with your own and said, "My father," "My mother"?

It is not doing honour to God if we slur over the land of the living because we believe in a life that is greater still. While I am a child, let me think as a child, live as a child. While I am a son of man, buffeted, tempted, beaten back struggling in the contest between the right and the wrong, labouring for ideals which never seem to materialise, winning my way through difficulties and threading my way through the mist and blackness, while I am so conditioned, let me be so conditioned. Let me believe to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living.

I like those words of Henley's:—

"Thunder the brave irresistible message,
Life is worth living
Through every grain of it,
From the foundation
To the last edge
Of the corner-stone death."

"Through every grain of it," and some of the grains are hot and scorching. You would gladly slouch through them or sweep them aside. Does it not de-

pend upon which "I" is dominant, the lower or the higher one? The one which says "I am fainting" or the other one which answers "I believe!" "Life is worth living through every grain of it," but let your better self be revitalised, strengthened by prayer and communion with your God. Let it stand up and say within your soul, "I believe!"

These are great days through which we are living—the world has probably seen no greater. When you look abroad and think of that new impulse that came this very week, to cheer the lives of men, from the Washington Conference, did you think what that has meant to the psychology of the world? It is as if the sun broke through the clouds, as if a fresh sea breeze drove away the malaria, as if we began to feel there is a way of escape from that stifling suspicion and international rivalry which threatened the world with destruction. If that prove false, it will be because men will not trust the future, but looking only on the past, shall say "It is impossible." It will succeed (it will not bring the Millenium), but it will open the door to further advance if men put behind it their higher self and say, "I BELIEVE."

For what men believe, if they believe it numerous enough, intelligently enough, bravely enough, they can at last do.

These words of the text, as you might guess, have some personal significance for me this morning. I had not intended to mention the fact, until it was mentioned in the announcements, that I have just closed the second year of my ministry here at the City Temple. You will not be surprised to know that the

text was suggested to my mind because of that fact. I remembered that there was an "I" that whispered, "I dare not; I faint." I remembered that there was another "I" that said, two years ago, in stronger tones, "I believe." I bear my glad witness this morning that it was better to have yielded to the voice which said "I believe" than to the one which said "I dare not."

I bear my grateful witness to you that you have fortified that belief with your constant sympathy and thought and prayer.

I bear witness to my officers, who have been about me as a strong wall. I am sorry that one of them is not with us to-day because of illness; I hope he will soon be back again in his accustomed place.

I bear my grateful tribute to the sidesmen, who, week in, week out, by their unostentatious service, help on the work and make it move smoothly.

I bear my witness to all those loyal and loving hearts who are working behind the scenes; and I bear my witness to this gifted and beautiful choir behind me, whose greatest glory seems to be the way they subordinate their talent to the effect of the preaching.

And the preaching should be subordinate to the good of the people, while they who receive good should seek to translate its influence into the greater glory of God and the greater service of man.

"I had fainted, unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living." Let the stronger "I," the more believing "I," rise up in your heart and life, and may each one of you go

forth to face your life afresh this morning, saying in your heart, "Whatever be my difficulties, let me see the goodness of the Lord here in the land of the living, in that compensating, counter-checking, redeeming, Divine 'Unless,' which arrests decay and averts catastrophe."

Let the stronger believing self overcome the weaker doubting self, and go forth to believe and to conquer.

XIV

THE ONE THING

TEXT: *Luke 10:42.* But one thing is needful.

JESUS' explanation of life is not analytical—it is synthetical. He does not take it to pieces and explain its parts; He shows it to us whole—He makes us feel the wholeness of life as no one else does.

Nature is one great unity—there is a direct relationship between the farthest star and the smallest daisy. There is a direct connection between the bending of the stalk of a flower and the swing of a planet.

A friend of mine, who is both an artist and a naturalist, was explaining to me that every leaf upon a tree sends its tiny thread of woody matter down through the twig into the branches and the trunk itself, and even into the root. The growth of a tree is not upward only, the thickening comes down also from above; every leaf is not stuck on to the tree, but is part of the oneness of the tree, and the artist who would paint a tree truly must discern that. Many an artist has missed it; the genius of Turner never missed it.

For most people, life is a central stem of existence, with a heterogeneous mass of accidental things clinging to it. They would like to cut away a lot of things from their life, which seem to have no relation to its

real purpose, and are not organic parts of one great whole.

For Jesus, life as a whole—it was “one thing.” That is an expression we often hear upon His lips; it is a thought we often find in His parables. “Martha,” He said, “but one thing is needful.” These sisters had divided that one thing into two; the one showed the spirit of service, the other showed the spirit of worship, and these two were in conflict. To Him they were one—life is both service and worship.

“One thing thou lackest,” He said to the young man. It was not poverty He was recommending, but here was a man whose life was torn in two; his spiritual desires and his material possessions were in conflict; the man’s life was not whole, and Jesus only put His finger upon the indicative thing to show where the divergence came in, and made an appeal for the unity of life.

I read to you just two of His parables; there is a whole cluster in this 13th chapter of Matthew.

“The Kingdom of Heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field; the which, when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field.”—*That one thing.*

“Again, the Kingdom of Heaven is like unto a merchant man seeking goodly pearls: who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had and bought it.”—*He bought the one thing.*

Life is never right for anybody until it becomes ONE THING. What was the one thing in the mind of Jesus? I think we cannot pause for a moment in

doubt. If you had never seen the Gospels, and I put them into your hand for the first time, especially the three Synoptic Gospels, and said to you, "Read that, and tell me what is characteristic of Jesus, what it was that dominated Him," you would turn over the pages and say, "Why this man is always talking about the Kingdom of God; it seems to be the one thought that possesses His mind.

Jesus spoke about the Kingdom of God partly because everybody else was speaking about it; it was the question of the day; all men were dreaming about it. It was a thought that had come a long way down through history; it had been the theme of the prophets; it had been the theme of those later writers, whose writings for us have dropped out between the end of the canon of the Old Testament and the beginning of the canon of the New. Most of the prophetic writings had their origin about the time of the great exile of the Jewish people. In those days of exile, the prophets dreamed of a great day that was coming, when the Kingdom of God would be set up on earth, and, as is natural in our wonderful human nature, when we are lowest down, hope shines brightest; when we are confronted with one trouble, we are always seeing through it and beholding the dawn of a new light. So the prophets spoke as if, when the exile should be over and the people should be restored again to the ancient land, the Kingdom of God would come; the day would dawn at last when God would reign supreme, when Israel's ancient glory would come back to her, when there should be one faith throughout all the earth, when war should be no more, and swords and spears

should be beaten into implements of peace. It would be a time when even Nature herself would glow with additional beauty. The sun would be seven times brighter than before, the very wild beasts would lose their fierceness, and the lion would lie down with the lamb.

All the idyllic pictures charmed the minds of the people in the days of their bondage and punishment, but when at last they came back to the promised land, they did not find it all they had hoped. This people, who for seventy years or more had not known what it was to be free or rule themselves, were now torn and rent with schisms, and it was not long before their weakness brought first the Greeks and then the Romans down upon them, and their Holy City itself at last was dominated with foreign troops. A mood of pessimism settled down upon the people; they did not lose their faith in that day of God, but it took upon itself more sombre colours, and the teachers who now arose spoke as if the world were utterly bad and could not be made right from within. God had forsaken them. But after a time, He would come again they said, He would break in from without, suddenly, with power, with flaming authority and rending cataclysm, and the Kingdom would come at last.

When Jesus began His teaching, that is the way all men were talking, that was the way they were dreaming. They wanted to know more than anything else what *He* had to say about the Kingdom of God. What He said was,—“The Kingdom of God is here; you have not to wait for it, it is here; the King-

dom of God is among you; the Kingdom of God is within you."

The Kingdom is like,—what? Like everything. Whatever His eyes rested upon, He said "The Kingdom is like *that*." If He saw a sower sowing in the fields, He said,—“The Kingdom of God is like *that*.” If He saw men fishing in the lake, He said “The Kingdom of God is like *that*.” If He saw a woman at work in her kitchen, measuring her meal and mixing her leaven, He said,—“The Kingdom is like *that*.” The Kingdom of God is like everything your eyes rest upon, if you can see it. •It is there all the time; you have not to wait for something to break in from without. There is no cataclysm, no divine rushing interference; the Kingdom is *here*.

That was the message of Jesus, and when He talked like that, He was not blind to life's anomalies or to life's difficulties. He did not imagine that evil did not exist; He knew it was there; but He saw the oneness of the world beneath the diversities. He said,—“The sower goes forth to sow; he sows one seed, but some of it falls on the wayside and is snatched away by the birds; some falls on shallow ground; some falls amidst thorns and is choked; some on good ground; but it is one Truth.”

The Kingdom of God is like a man who sowed good seed, but an enemy sowed tares, and presently they said to Him,—“Behold the tares amidst the wheat; shall we pluck away the tares?” and He said,—“Let both grow together till the harvest.”

You cannot get rid of evil like that; it will be there until the end, let them grow together. The Kingdom

of God is not absent because the tares are growing with the wheat. The harvest is one complete thing.

The Kingdom of God is like a fisherman, who cast out his net, and lo, it encompassed a great multitude of fishes—some of them good and some bad. You must wait until the end before you separate the good from the bad. But the net is one.

The Kingdom of God to Him was not a thing that did not exist because evil remained; the Kingdom was there in the midst of evil, if you had eyes to see.

"There is nothing new under the sun," said the pessimist long, long ago. There is nothing that man has found out in all the long centuries of his life upon the planet that was not there potentially in the beginning. All man's great discoveries have been simply discoveries of how to avail himself of things that were already there.

You remember the traditional tale of how Hans Lippershey, looking out through a shop window, accidentally placed in line two lenses, one convex and the other concave, in either hand so that his sight, passing through both made the steeple of a neighboring church seem strangely near. It was only the discovery of how to use old things that made new worlds swim into view.

When Fulton learned how to make the first steamship, you remember how he used to watch the ferryman, a returned soldier who had lost his arms but yet wanted to earn a living. He had devised two paddles which he could work with his feet so that they turned in the water and propelled his boat. And Fulton said, "I want something that will drive a propeller like that

and I shall have a ship." Steam was a most familiar thing—he had but learned how to use it.

Electricity is not a new thing; it was there in the days of Abraham; but at last men discovered how to avail themselves of it, and the world took on new characteristics. The Kingdom had been there all the time, but they had not known how to live as its citizens.

When the minds of men opened to the wonders of wireless telegraphy, it was not because it was a new thing, it was only because they had found out the existence of an old thing.

There are wonders yet coming upon us, which will make the triumphs of our day seem mere child's play. There are things men will do in the future, maybe in the near future, before which the imagination at this moment would reel in utter unbelief. But, whatever he does, he will never make a new thing—he will only discover and put himself into harmonious relationship with some old, old thing that the Creator placed, potentially at any rate, in the heart of His world when He launched it upon its course.

Jesus would have us believe it is the same with moral dynamics, as it is with physical dynamics. You do not want God to break in with new and awful power, you only want to open your heart to Him and put yourself in harmonious relationship with powers that already exist. The Kingdom of God is among you, the Kingdom of God is here!

Ah, but you say,—“How can you talk like that in a world as we see it to-day? Are you blind; are you not conscious of the utter wretchedness, the starvation, the hatred, the turmoil, the unrest, that makes the almost

monotonous configuration of the world as we look out upon it?" Yes, I am conscious of all that. No man has a right to forget the back-ground of the world's tragedy in these days, but still I repeat, the Kingdom of God is here, it is among you, within you. The reason of that chaos is that men have not lived in this world as if the Kingdom of God was really here. Some of them were teaching that the world was utterly bad, and as such was only doomed to judgment. Some were teaching that the economic laws were not consonant with religious faith. They have been dislocating the world; they have been treating it wrongfully, manipulating it, breaking its harmonies, destroying its music, and *because* it is the Kingdom of God, it is all a jangle with discords. We have been acting in it as if it were a jungle of wild beasts, and the great discovery we have got to make and re-make is how to live in it as citizens of God's Kingdom—that is the only way. I am not blind to evil; I know its presence, I know its power, but the test of life and the essence of life, the last great purpose surely of the Divine Being, is to bring into existence at last an ever-growing race of men and women who will live within the world that He has made like citizens of the Kingdom of God.

We have to make a re-discovery of the power of moral forces; we have to learn that we must give ourselves to the discovery of moral dynamics with the same earnestness that we give ourselves to the mastery of physical power. We have to learn that God will flow in upon us in the realm of the soul as He flows in upon us when, with our lamps of knowledge, we enquire into the secret of the laws of nature. It is

just the discovery that, in spite of all apparent contradictions, the Kingdom of God is WITH US that is the supreme discovery to which our Lord referred so often in His parables.

I love this parable of the treasure hid in a field, but I love still more this parable of the pearl-seeker:—

“The Kingdom of Heaven is like unto a merchant-man seeking goodly pearls, who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had and bought it.”

No pearl-seeker goes out to seek one pearl of great price; he goes out to seek pearls—any pearls. He is a lover of pearls, he will be interested in a pearl wherever he finds it, whether small or great; he will pay its appropriate price and gather it into his stock. It is a systematic search; it is a love for little pearls, for all manner of pearls, until one day his unceasing search at last brings him face to face with one great pearl. It is a parable of dilligent search and of speculative faith, for it is one thing to buy a field and another thing to buy a pearl. You might not find a market for your great pearl; you must take the risk of that; but this man loves the beauty of pearls so much, is so fascinated by the grandeur and the loveliness of this one, that he takes the risk and sacrifices many a smaller thing that he may lay hold of this one great thing that makes the world beautiful for him.

The Kingdom of God is not a lucky find—the Kingdom of God is the reward of diligent search. The Kingdom of God is a challenge to speculative faith, an appeal to heroism, an appeal to constructive ability; it

is the laying out of life in a solemn conviction; it is a test everywhere; it is a battle all the time.

The Kingdom of God is like my pulpit. I must occupy it if I can as if we were all children of God, as if the supreme thing were to bring one another so far as possible into relation with God. If the day ever comes when that seems impossible, if the day ever comes when conscience leads one way and interest another, the Kingdom of God may seem like a pearl of great price, and a man, if he be true, must sell all he has to keep his pearl.

The Kingdom of God is like your business. Ah, but you say, "You do not know what business is like these days, with its keen competition, its unscrupulous buying and selling, its breaking of contracts, and its ruthless disregard of mere philanthropy,—you do not know what business is like." Yes I do, but that is where the test comes in. It may be you started in your business career with very high ideals, but when you faced facts and the pressure of things came down upon you, you surrendered your ideal and said, "I must do as other men do," and now the Kingdom to you is a vague memory of bygone hopes. In short, you failed. You should have sold all that you had to be true to the Kingdom; not recklessly, but even in the days when you were swept away by the power of the system, you should have battled to recover your feet. Even in the days when you went wrong and it seemed as if you could not help it, you should not have succumbed, you should have struggled back, for business itself is only possible in the long run by virtue of the principles of the Kingdom of God. If you let go

your moral restraint, you are only doing what if everybody else did would soon result in having no business to do at all.

The Kingdom of God is no cheap, easy thing; Jesus never said so; what He said was, "It is here, and if men are brave enough, patient enough, persistent enough, loyal enough, they can enter into it."

H. G. Wells, in his "Outline of History," says of Napoleon Bonaparte:—

"His fascination lies in his sheer unscrupulousness. He was a record—a record plunger. He was as few men are, or dare to be, a scoundrel, bright and complete. He had no religion; no moral conflict ever disturbed him; and this self-conceit and fundamental atheism made him at least magnificently direct. What we want to do secretly more or less, he did in the daylight. Directness was his distinctive and immortalising quality. In all history, there is no figure so completely antithetical to the figure of Jesus of Nazareth, whose pitiless and difficult doctrine of self-abandonment and self-forgetfulness we can neither disregard nor yet bring ourselves to obey. In that antithesis lies the essential historical importance of Napoleon."

I do not want to create in your minds a discussion concerning Napoleon, but we all know something of that spirit, the spirit that must have directness. There is the man who in his business would like to act according to the ethics of Christ, but there is one thing he wants still more, and that is wealth; he puts that first and misses the other. We would all like the principles of Christ brought into our national concerns. We have nearly wrecked the world with the other thing,

and we are trying to feel our way back, but we like directness, and we say, "We must have our safeguards."

"*Britannia must rule the waves.*"

"*Germany must be over all.*"

"*France must be secure against her ancient enemy, and have her natural frontiers.*"

"*Russia must find her way to the sea.*"

"*America must safeguard her Monroe Doctrine.*"

Yes, and we go the way of directness until we strike the rocks. Maybe, if we sought first the Kingdom of God, all these things would be added to us. Maybe, if Germany had sought first the Kingdom, her genius for organisation might have given her a legitimate supremacy. She tried to gain it by the sword and lost. Maybe, if France would go the way of the Kingdom of God, she would cease to have an ancient enemy and find instead a neighbour. Maybe, if Britain would go the way of the Kingdom of God, she would be supreme upon the seas by reason of her native talent for seamanship, and would not need to keep it so much by the power of her blatant cannon. Maybe, if America would take her share more fully in human service, she would find her security not in the separating sea, but in the uniting force of brotherhood.

Maybe the way of the Kingdom of God is the right way after all. Maybe we have not organised sufficiently our capacity for right; maybe we never explain our reasons, but we put second things first, until the world becomes a torn thing, and we say at last, "We cannot reconcile the Kingdom of God with the things

we hold to be necessary." I know! That simply means we are not big enough, or intelligent enough yet, that is all.

Jesus did not despise the untoward elements that were in His life. He had a traitor at His very board, who betrayed Him while he dipped his finger in the dish, but He did not hate the traitor, He took him as part of life. He had men all around Him who were thirsting for His blood, but He did not hate them; He took them like the fisherman takes the bad fish with the good. He saw the Cross looming up against the storm-swept sky, and He took it as part of the things that belong to the Kingdom, and had faith enough to believe that even with the Cross He could win through.

He was not so unpractical as men think. The facts are with Him. He did build a Kingdom which has lasted longer than any other kingdom the world has ever seen. He has proved for us that the world is a Kingdom of God for those who will live it like its citizens. It is not mere idealism I am preaching: I have had enough buffetings and seen enough of life to know that you cannot *talk* the Kingdom into existence, but it makes all the difference in the world when a man sees that, in spite of everything, this world is athrill with the Divine Presence, and all that is wrong with it is that we are not clean enough, not brave enough, not patient enough, not constructive enough in the things of the Kingdom of God. It is a truth that once perceived, even amidst the storm, once grasped, even amidst the conflict, is like a pearl of great price. It is worth fighting for; it is worth holding on to; it

is worth selling all that you have to make it clear at last to your own soul, if not to anybody else, that the world is not a jungle full of wolves, but is God's world, full of His Spirit, and its basic thing after all is not hate, but LOVE.

XV

WANTED: LEADERS FOR THE CROWD

TEXT: *Matt. 9:35.* But when he saw the multitudes he was moved with compassion for them, because they were distressed and scattered, as sheep not having a shepherd. . . . And he called unto him his twelve disciples.

JESUS was the only man who ever *saw* a multitude. It is not given to many to see, least of all to see a multitude. No man ever saw a multitude, unless he saw it timelessly and without reference to space. Who can truly see a multitude but Omniscience? To see a multitude you must look back before the beginning of the Creation, you must look on beyond the time when planets and stars shall dissolve. You must see men not only in the mass, you must see them as individuals. You must see down to the utmost possible depths of their degradation, you must see up to the utmost possible heights of their glory. You must discern their motives, their hopes, their fears, their loves, their hates and the infinite complexity of their relationships.

Few people see a multitude except in relation to some thought that is already in their mind. The King sees perhaps a multitude of subjects, the statesmen a multitude of voters; the commercial man a multitude of potential customers, the military man a multitude of potential soldiers. The scientist sees, maybe,

a mere agglomeration of units having a relation to some special theory that is in his mind, but no one can see a multitude truly except he is omniscient and also loves them for their own sakes.

More than twenty years ago my predecessor, Dr. Parker, preaching from this text, said:—

“Do not suppose that our Lord saw the multitude for the first time when He came down to earth; He came down to earth because He had already seen the multitude.”

That is an expression which was more readily acceptable twenty years ago than now. We have put the emphasis upon the humanity of Jesus in our time, and one of our great difficulties is to perceive the importance and the reality of Jesus over the vista of the centuries. To us sometimes He seems a figure that is growing indistinct with the passing of time. The land in which He lived is a microscopic portion of land in comparison with the world as we see it to-day. The cities and villages in which He preached would scarcely be made noticeable by dots upon our map, and one of our difficulties is to bridge the centuries and perceive that Jesus is not really smaller because His figure is far away, nor is Palestine necessarily less important because geographically it is microscopic.

The marvel of Jesus is His insight. He saw not kinds of men, He saw MAN. He needed not that any should tell Him concerning man, for He Himself knew what was in man. It is the quality of His insight that has kept Him in the centre of humanity through the changing centuries. It is perfectly true

that the place where He lived was a very circumscribed place. His feet never carried Him outside the boundaries of Palestine, but even so, He saw men not localised, but universalised, He saw MAN.

Space is almost nothing, spirit is everything. Every little city in Palestine in the days of our Lord was a walled city remote from every other city. Jerusalem was one city, Jericho was another, and the way between was perilous and infested with robbers. Every little village was isolated and set apart from the neighbouring villages, walled around, not with earth or stone, but with prejudice and convention.

"Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" said Nathanael, who lived in Cana of Galilee, which was in the same district. The mountains of Samaria stood in lonely isolation and armed hostility over against the mountains of Jerusalem, and bore witness to their mutual separation.

"Dog of a Samaritan," hissed the Jew between his teeth: "Dog of a Jew," answered the Samaritan in his heart.

For Jesus to pass through the cities and the villages of that tiny land, refusing to see these surface differences, preaching the one Gospel of the Kingdom, was every bit as great as if a man of our time were to cover the whole globe and pass through the barriers that separate races. Let us not speak of the narrowness of Jesus' environment until we are sure we have caught the catholicity of His Spirit. There are still men who cannot see over the walls of prejudice. There are those who see no multitude outside the circle of their own family. There are those who cannot see

over the barriers of class, and there are little patriots who have no cognisance of the peoples who live beyond their national frontiers. It would revolutionise the world this very day if men could see man as MAN. There is not one person in 100,000 who can get beneath the surface and discern the unity beneath the differences. Germany is not occupied by Germans; it is occupied by men, women and children. It is not Russians who are dying in their multitudes of starvation; it is men, women and children. It is not Armenians who are the off-scouring of Europe; it is men, women and children. It would revolutionise the world in a single generation if we could capture the catholicity of spirit which distinguished the Master.

Space is nothing, spirit is everything. He is not far away from us because He lived nineteen centuries ago. He is with us because His view of life is timeless. He is not remote and provincial because His feet rest in the little land of Palestine; He is universal, because He saw men without reference to time or space, nay, He saw deeper still—He saw men as eternal spirits.

The distinguishing thing about the gaze of the Master was its compassion. No man ever yet saw a crowd who did not feel its unutterable pity. "There must be an infinite pity," some one has said, "to correspond with the infinite pathos of life." We skim over the multitude, discerning only those points of contact which concern ourselves most closely. We have been blind to the multitude unless we have felt the stirrings of compassion.

We may drop a tear or feel a momentary tremor of sentiment, but compassion is not sentiment; com-

passion is redemption touched with pity. Jesus captured the world because He drew to Himself its sorrow. No other appeal would have lasted through the centuries like that; it is the ground of our unity, after all. That is not necessarily a gloomy view. I hold that this little planet upon which we live is but a fragment of God's Universe. I hold that this mortal life we are passing through now is but a clause in the long tale of life. I hold that sorrow is a part of the music of creation. This is, maybe, a "planet of tears," but whatever existences lie beyond, they need tears, they need the hallowing of sorrow. There has been no great art, no great literature, no great music that has not been touched with the mystery of sorrow, there has been no true happiness that has not been blended with sorrow, there has been no exquisite beauty that has not been seen through the rainbow of tears. All great unities among men are the unities that are based upon compassion. The world is sick of the unities that come about by the manipulations of votes and the fluctuations of self-interest. There will never be unity among men until the bottom ground of it all shall be compassion.

There is no true love between man and man or between man and woman if its bonds are only the bonds of admiration and mutual interest; we have not begun to love until we have learned each other's limitations, and have been touched with compassion for one another's frailties.

There is no true trade until the pathos of trade has come home to our hearts. If we only see the world as a potential market, its population as potential cus-

tomers, and do not see the pathos of the human need that brings them to us as customers, it is no wonder that we are only building upon the thin surface of life, and every now and again are appalled by the tragic depths that are beneath.

Sorrow is, after all, God's principle of unity, it is the only thing which in the last resort holds the world together; we are brought back to something like brotherhood and fellowship every now and again by pity and compassion. There is doubtless an existence beyond, where this will not be so, but even that existence could not be what we hope except upon its threshold God shall wipe away all tears from men's eyes. The Heaven that was not entered through a mist of tears would not be Heaven. Let us trust God about the mystery of sorrow, and look more deeply than we have for its meaning in life.

The sorrow of Jesus for the multitude was not a mere sentiment. He saw down to its cause, and this was what touched His great heart, that "men were fainting and scattered abroad as sheep having no shepherd." It was not the sickness of men, for they could be cured; it was the aimlessness of men that was the supreme sorrow. It was not that they had no points of contact and fellowship, but that they huddled together like sheep in blind confidence, and scattered again like frightened sheep in moments of equally blind distrust. It was the aimlessness of their lives that touched His great heart. The Master was going abroad with a great all-comprehensive message of the Kingdom. He was trying to give men a motive for living, an objective to seek. Men were not deliberately

bad so much as that they had no objective; they were like sheep huddled together or scattering they scarcely knew why. We have not seen very deeply into life unless we have perceived that this aimlessness is its real burden for many people, the constant necessity of dealing with things that come to them every day, the pressure of the crowd, the pressure of need, the necessity of the daily task for the earning of bread, the constant call to engage in great social or national combinations, yet all the time no clear vision of the meaning of life and the objective to be sought.

That is the pathos of life. You can herd men together so easily for wrong purposes, albeit you can see in the midst of their strivings the glory and the grandeur, the magnificent heroism, the splendid power so often wasted on objectives that are not worthy. That is the abiding pathos of things! There is nothing that can cure that perennial sorrow except the discovery of a true purpose in life. Wealth will not cure it. No man, perhaps, is more miserable than the monied man with no direct aim in life. Success will not cure it. No elevation amongst men will bring satisfaction if, as he stands upon his eminence, the man knows he has lost his way.

It is the function of true religion to give men true objectives in life; if we have not done that, that is the real tragedy. There is all manner of capacity for the good and the noble in men if only they see clearly what it is they have to seek. Jesus came to give men just that perception of life's meaning. He lifted it to a high and noble altitude, made it to transcend the mere limitations of mortal life, to go deeper

than the mere surface fluctuations of success or failure, happiness or sorrow. He came to give men a sense of a deep fellowship with the great Eternal, of Son-ship with Him which should make life acceptable to them in all its many shades of difference.

When He perceived the pathos of the fact that the multitude were like sheep having no shepherd, was it not natural that He should turn to find leaders for the people, and that out of His compassion came the calling of the Twelve?

After all there is a place in life for a spiritual aristocracy. There are shepherds as well as sheep, there are leaders as well as followers, and the supreme need of men, taken as a multitude, is that of true leadership, the leadership that will be swayed with compassion. So often leadership is not swayed by that at all. Military leadership may be swayed by desire for victory. Napoleon said,—“What are a million men to a man like me?” The thing that made that genius, who was fitted to be a great leader of men, a curse at last was the absence of compassion. He saw great objectives, but he was not touched with the pity of it all.

The politician may see men in relation to their votes; he wants to sweep their suffrages in a certain direction; he may have become insensible to their sufferings. It is the absence of the spirit of compassion that makes much of that kind of leadership a curse instead of a blessing.

The Press-man may see men in relation to the circulation of the paper he represents, and the pathos of

the multitude's appeal for news and guidance may fade away out of his heart.

The preacher may see men merely as a congregation, seeking to sweep them with him as a multitude, but if he loses the sense of the infinite pity of it all he will become possibly a curse rather than a blessing.

The true leadership that feels the pity of the multitude and seeks to give true guidance to one's fellows, is the aristocratic gift of God. It means, of course, that it should be received early in life, and not late. What man among you young men will put himself into the Christ's school, that he may be fitted, trained, made ready for Christ's leadership? You cannot begin too soon. If that is your objective it does not only mean that you should give yourself up to some special calling which we call sacred. Men are wanted in the market-place, in the forum and the Factory, quite as much as they are wanted in the pulpit. The object of the pulpit is to create an atmosphere for the Factory and the Forum. It is *there* perhaps that the real work has to be done. Commercial life translated into terms of Christian leadership, political life all athrob with Christian purposes. These are the world's crying needs, and to them in a sense the pulpit is subsidiary because it is the root out of which that type of man grows, yet transcendent because it may bring down from the spiritual realm the forces that will help to accomplish these things in the world.

I see that men have got to discussing again the rites of ordination, and that some people have been attacking our friend Dr. Orchard because he has sought some new form of ordination. Let him alone!

He is preaching Christ's Gospel in this city as few men are preaching it, preaching with power and effectiveness. His point of view is perfectly consistent. His great objective is the union of the Churches, and he holds that men should go as far as possible without the sacrifice of principle in order to achieve it. If he chooses to have his ministry made valid in the Episcopalian and Presbyterian as well as in Congregational form, let him alone, and God bless him! The world is not dying because it is not getting the right type of ordination, but because not enough people have received the ordination of the Christ. From my point of view, while I seek the same objective, I put little stress upon priestly ordination, it is the ordination of the Pierced Hand that matters, it is what the old Quakers used to call the "constraint laid upon them, the sense of a Divine calling, the feeling that one has been 'moved' of God. I do not know any man, Pope, Prelate or Priest, who can give that to another or add to it when once it is given. What I am longing for is a greater company of the ordained, not a restricted select circle of men regarded as Christ's special servants, but a broadening circle of men and women who will go out into all the many avenues of life and engage in all its many tasks, holding their vocation as a sacred trust, seeking to give guidance to their fellow-men, and the leadership that brings mankind into the Kingdom of God.

I really do not care to distinguish which is the most important in this world, the minister or the merchant, the statesman or the pressman. It is not the locality where we spend our life or the manner

of the things with which we deal; it is the spirit in which we deal with them that matters.

There is a clamant call, and I pray that it may come to some of you this morning for the yielding of yourselves as pupils of the Christ, that you may catch His vision of the solidarity of mankind, feel at your heart the throb of His compassion for the sorrows of mankind, and whether in pulpit or street, forum or market-place, seek to give leadership to your fellows to bring them into the Kingdom of God.

XVI

"LAST OF ALL"

TEXT: *Mark* 12:6. He had yet one, a beloved Son; he sent him last unto them saying, They will reverence my Son.

IF is the glory of Jesus Christ that He is last of all. It is only he who is last who is worthy of worship; it was His own word, spoken often, "the last shall be first and the first shall be last." There have been many firsts and the ages have rolled over them and left them behind indistinguishably. The ages will never roll over Jesus the Christ for He is last of all. He drives the ages before Him like a flock of sheep and when He has driven them into the fold at the consummation of the Divine purposes He will close the door with the triumphant proclamation, "I am the last of all!"

When Jesus spoke these words, He was thinking of course of that long line of prophets which had preceded Him. In all the great developments of history, there is always the man and the time for the man. He knew Himself to be *the Man*, He felt within Himself that they who had preceded Him had but foreshadowed Him, prepared the way for Him. He did not look down upon them, He had fellowship with them, but He knew that He had come from an interior-ness in God to which they were strangers. He did

not hesitate to move in advance of their teaching,—He felt within Himself that He had brought the line to a close. He was the last of all!

He could not but be conscious also of the fact that the hour had come. It is indeed one of the marvels of history to see the concentration of forces that beat upon the hour when Jesus came. He *had* to come,—the hour was ready for Him. There are no greater tragedies in history than those of the man who comes before the hour has struck, or the man who comes after the hour has passed. The hour was waiting when Jesus came, the people had been prepared, prepared through a long history and through a severe training to carry forward the message of the evangel. The Roman Empire had unconsciously prepared the world for the King of God.

A language had been prepared; the Greek tongue had spread over all the earth. Every Jew might speak with a Hebrew accent, every Roman who mixed in public affairs knew at least the Latin phrases, but the Greek tongue was the speech of every man from Jerusalem to Rome. The language was ready for the message that Jesus had brought, and there was also desire. It seemed as if everywhere there had been a breakdown, a breakdown in life, a breakdown in philosophy. Even in the realm of Jewish religion the law of Moses had ceased to satisfy the best souls. The hour had come and the Man had come and Jesus knew within Himself that he was the last of all.

Yet the consciousness of that did not blind Him to the reception He would receive. He saw quite clearly that the Cross would be His portion. He knew that

reverence does not always bow the knee and worship, it may be swayed by some meaner motive and become all the more determined in its hostility, more bitter in its anger and He saw quite clearly that, Man of the ages though He was, coming in the hour of the ages though He did, He would be cast out and would be Last of All. They were determined to make Him so, they resolved to slay Him; as if that was not enough they determined to crucify Him between two thieves; they would make Him in the midst of the people as the "last of all." He accepted the position, accepted it because of His faith in God and in the ages. He knew within himself that the Cross would be the talisman of His power, knew that at long last the symbol of shame would be the symbol of glory. He accepted with resignation and even with joy the last degradation that men could put upon Him, knowing that last of all He would win His kingdom even through His shame. He had said to them:—"When the Lord therefore of the vineyard cometh, what will he do unto those husbandmen?" and they said, judging themselves out of their own mouths:—"He will miserably destroy those wicked men and will let out his vineyard unto other husbandmen, which shall render him the fruits in their seasons."

It was no doubt that idea that possessed the minds of His own disciples. They believed that Jesus would come again and come again soon, that the tragedy of the Cross would soon be obliterated in the glory of His return. You cannot turn the pages of the New Testament without discovering that this hope of the immediate return of the Christ was one of the great

springs of their activity. "The Judge standeth at the door," cries James. "The night is far spent, the day is at hand," says Paul. "Ye are in heaviness for a little while," says Peter, "waiting for the appearing of the Lord."

Everywhere you turn through the literature of the New Testament you find that the disciples of Jesus had much the same thought in their minds as those Pharisees had expressed. The Christ was to them the sure precursor of God's early judgment; the Christ would come again and close the ages, He would be the last of all. Already before the New Testament closes you discover how men are becoming distressed in mind because of the delay in this great consummation. When you read the Epistle to the Thessalonians you see how they were distressed because some of the believing folk were dropping one by one into the grave and they were afraid that they would thus miss participation in Christ's glory. Part of Paul's reason for writing that letter was to assure them that the early death of these believing folk would not rob them of their participation in the triumph of Christ which would close the ages.

Later, in this second Epistle of Peter you hear the voice of the mocker saying,—“Where is the promise of His coming? For from the day when the fathers fell asleep all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation.”

And yet, through the times that followed the New Testament you discover this hope of the early closing of the age is dominant in the mind of Christian people. You find it in the writing of Tertullian and

Irenaeus and Hypolitus. It is Augustine and the Greek fathers who followed him who seem to have struck a new note. Augustine began to interpret things differently. He said, He will not come soon, He will come at the close of the age—there will be a slow, steady growth of the Kingdom of God, there will at last be the Millennium and then He will come and be Last of All. Augustine interpreted the "coming" of Christ as taking place at the death of the faithful. He said, He will come back visibly to set up His Kingdom on earth, He will come in an hour when you think not, like a thief in the night.

These were days when Christian folk began to be otherworldly. They said the glory of Christ was to be revealed in a world other than this. Those were days when tremendous emphasis was put upon the brevity of life and the certainty of death, when men lived under the shadow of the impending launching into eternity. Slowly there came the inevitable corruption, slowly there took place the growth of priest-craft and ecclesiastical profession of great powers by which men would be prepared for the world that was to come, the emphasising of great mystic ordinances and sacraments which were believed to have tremendous power. Men began to think of the rites of the Church or of the solemnity of Christian Baptism or of Extreme Unction as preparing them for that great Kingdom of Christ which was to be Last of All. The echoes of it were heard in Protestant Evangelism; they have not quite died away even in our time. Many of us remember when Christ's salvation was spoken of as having reference to the world beyond rather than to

this present world. Men juggled with their chances of life and death, and thought that even if sin had swayed your life, so long as you made profession of faith in Christ at the eleventh hour, you would be safe for the life that was yet to be. Always it seemed as if some inevitable power was pushing back the sway of Christ to the background, where He was to be Last of All.

Then God touched his servant Copernicus and said to him in his heart, "Tell them how much bigger the world is than they dream"; He touched His servant Galileo and said, "Get your glasses and let them see how vast is the world beyond them, shake their faith in their theories, disturb their confidence in the realm that is hidden in the shadows and throw back their attention upon the world that is around them." And so it came to pass that the emphasis was shifted from the great hereafter to the present and during these last hundred years or so the emphasis on the personality of Christ has been upon His manhood rather than upon His Deity. He who in a reign of mere theology had become a kind of frame upon which dogmas were hung was now brought out of the shadows and the light of enquiry was thrown upon His manhood. We have been living through a time when the manhood of Christ has challenged all men, not always with reverent pen, sometimes with unbelieving pen, but never in all the history of the centuries has there been a time when so much fierce light has been focussed upon the person of Jesus of Nazareth. In our time and even in the time of our immediate fathers has the Christ been emerging with new glory,

and men see Him not only as Deity but as the climax of manhood—as the ideal man. It has been a good and great vision; the Christ has been appealing to the hearts of men during this last century with a new impingement, with a new emphasis, but He has still maintained His place as the Last of All.

Men have been searching back into the origins of things, far away through the mists of antiquity, by the flickering lamp of geology, by the torch of biology, but the farther they have penetrated the more insignificant has seemed the point they have reached in their search for the beginning of things, the more luminous and challenging and splendid has been the figure of the Christ which seems to stand at the other end of the evolutionary process, challenging men to say whether this was not the goal towards which man was marching.

When men turn the lamp upon His earthly life they begin to feel that the Christian life as believers should live it is a life that is concerned with the present world rather than the world that is beyond. There has been a deeper challenge to personal character in our time than ever before and more men and women have been seeking to live the Christ life amidst the material things of the world than ever before.

And then they have been forced to look upon the social conditions of the world, for there have been forces at work in our midst which have been making it more and more impossible to conceive of religion as a purely personal thing—we have been reaching out for a Christian solution of great corporate concerns. The more we have looked into these things the more

we have seen that Christ's place is not in the leadership of the van but Last of All. We have said, "Oh, yes, the Christian state is the ideal state, but it is not possible now. We say we cannot do our business in the light of the Christian ideal, we cannot manage our national affairs in the light of the Christian ideal." We do not reject the Christ, but we put Him last of all. And still the Providence of God has pursued us and will not let us rest, but is driving us back to the conclusion that we cannot get these things right until we get them right in the light of Christ. No man ever thought of settling them in the beginning in the light of Christ's teaching, in the power of His spirit. Strange it is to look back along the line of social reform and remember the days of Frederick Maurice, Kingsley and Ludlow who began to preach Christian Socialism in this city of London. In those days they were regarded as heterodox and extremists, but they held aloft the torch and fought valiantly for the truth as they saw it. The working men themselves did not accept the Christ, they turned away from Him to Karl Marx. Capitalism also thrust Christ back into the last place of all.

But He is behind the ages and the ultimate question is just that,—Is He last? He never could be first in this old world. When men accept the truth and the truth becomes dominant corruptions begin to gather round it, the battle for truth is an ever-recurring battle. No system holds its place through the ages, no teaching maintains the allegiance of the multitude through the ages. It is always night before it is dawn, there is always battle before there is Peace.

I do not know how any one can believe in the salvation of the world in toto; it is not in accordance with the conditions of our human life. As soon as we have won one victory another battle issues out of the midst of it. Each generation has its problem to solve. The ultimate question is, Is the Christ the last of all? Does He gather in each epoch, does He shepherd home each age? There has to be a fitness of the solution to the condition in which men are found. God's whole University cannot be comprised in the kindergarten of any generation. The fight for the Kingdom of God is a ceaseless fight. It does not grow simpler, but grander, it does not grow less intense, but broader in its sweep. So long as men live on this earth there will be the challenge to Christian discipleship and the ultimate question will be, Is He the *ultimate* One?

The marvel of the Christian faith is that nineteen hundred years ago He was set down in the dim dawn of things and has not been dislodged. When Jesus said of Himself that He had come last of all, He did not mean that He had brought the ages to a close, blocked the road to progress. He came not to close the age, but to inspire a new age. He said there would come others after Him and some would be evil, but He said also that His disciples would in some senses transcend Him. He said,—“He that believeth in me the works that I do shall he do also and greater works than these shall he do because I go unto the Father.”

He did not want that the ages should forever be slavishly bowed at His feet, with their backs to the

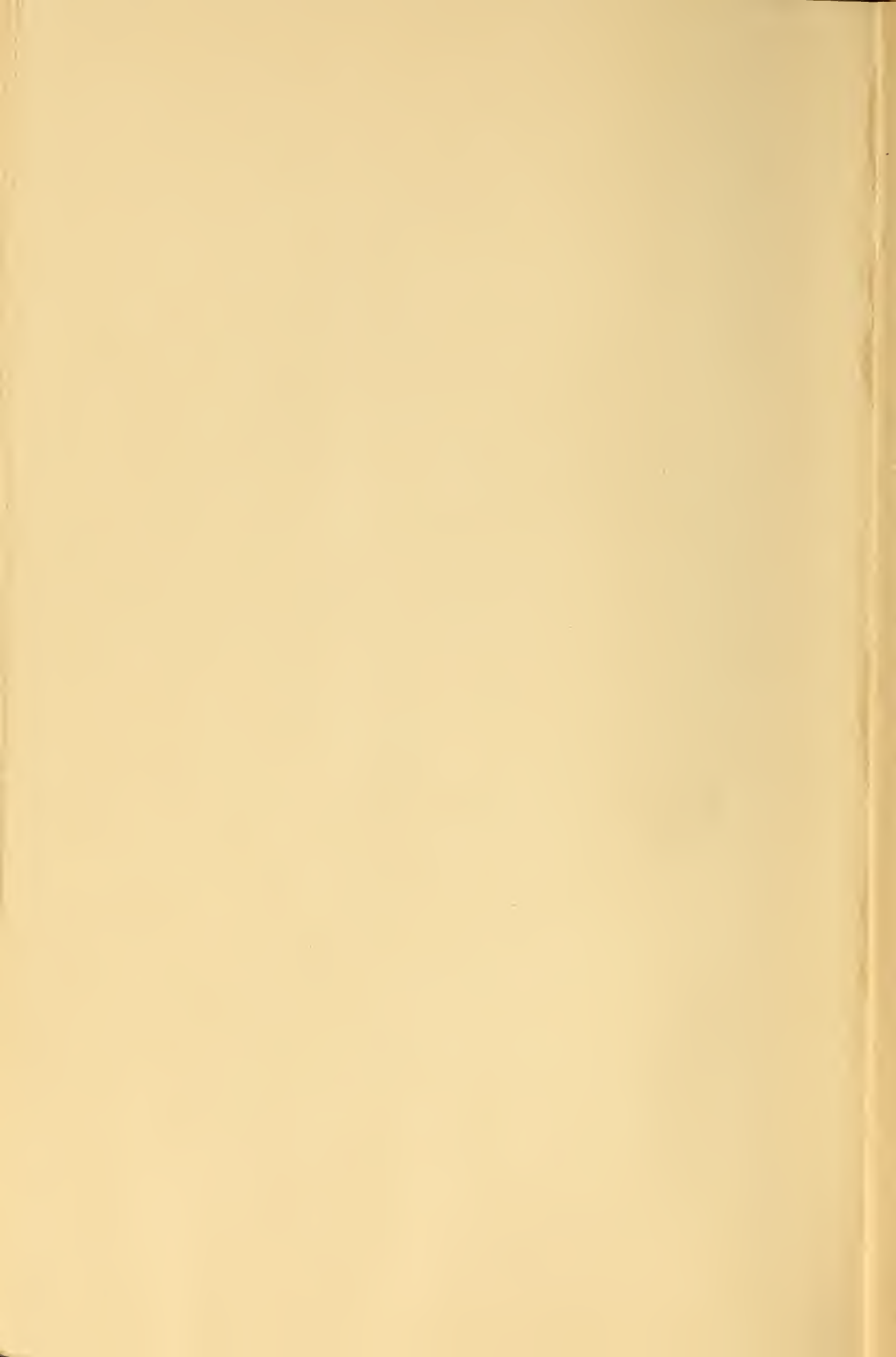
coming day and their faces to the past, He wanted men to go out with the light of the morning in their faces. He promised to be with them; He promised to endow them with power and supply them with wisdom. He knew that the scale of life would broaden, that man's restless mind would make discoveries of science, industry, travel, inter-communication. It was a great throbbing world already opening out in ever widening vistas when Jesus died, and He wanted His disciples to go out boldly and face the coming ages. He said, I will be with you, "Lo I am with you all the days, even unto the end."

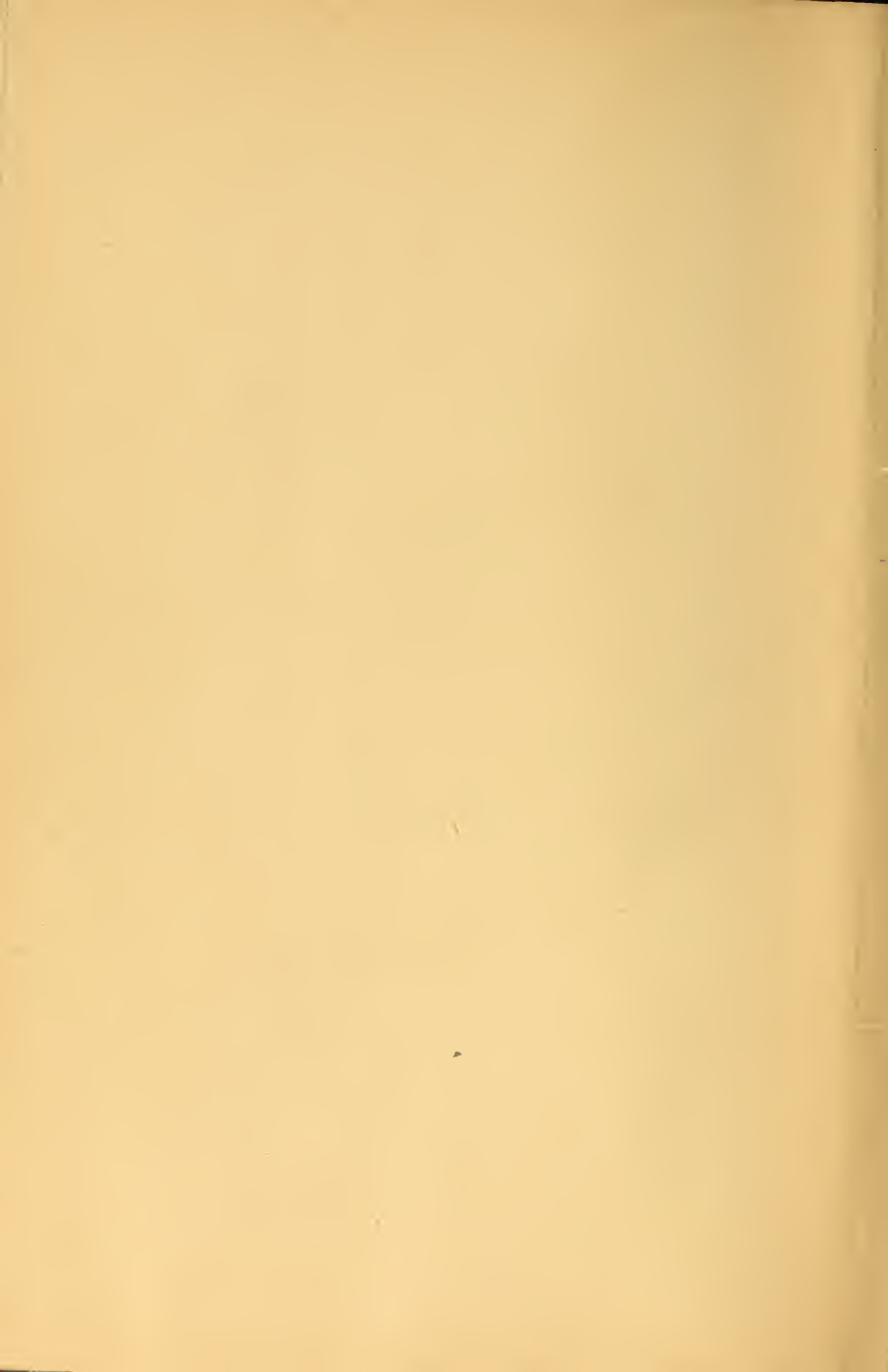
It is only in this way that the Christian life is tolerable; it is in this way that Christianity makes its appeal to the heroism of men. There is no progress for those whose faces are always turned backward; there is no joy for those who dare not face the future. The ultimate question is the question whether the Christ shall be the last of all. The way of salvation is the acceptance of the Christ as the expression of God's will and the yielding of ourselves to Him in His great purpose of bringing in the Kingdom of God. He *must* reign because the throne He occupies is peculiar to Him. There is no one to take His place; there is no one to mount the steps of that throne. He is last in the uniqueness of His personality, He is last in His relationship to God; He is last in the majesty of His message, He is last in the mystery of His Cross, He is last in the power of His spirit, but He is not final in His mere earthly form. He is with men as their dynamic and as their inspiration. "He *must*

reign till He hath put all enemies under His feet," and when all things are subjected to Him, then shall the Son also be subject unto Him who sent Him that God may be all in all.

THE END









LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



0 029 561 316 6